

THE INVOCATION



Issue #3 - December 2009

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Vampire Painting Guide

*Creating a Tournament
List*

Vampire Origins

*Win £40 worth of models
and more.....*

INVOCATION

The Invocation E-zine is a quarterly published E-zine produced by Carpe Noctem and its members

Editor

Disciple of Nagash

Proofreading and Layout

Disciple of Nagash and MasterSpark

Front Cover

Zephyr

Artwork

Malisteen and Johnny B

Article Contributors

Count Flapula

Disciple of Nagash

Johnny B

Get_of_W'soran

MasterSpark

Redarmy

Swissdictator

The Dark Sheep

The Pale Lady

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Greetings from the Perverted One

Editorial

Hello my perverted followers and welcome to Issue #3 of the Invocation!

Well here we are at our third issue and I have got to admit this has been the most difficult one yet, Firstly I want to thank the staff for the effort they have put in, as many have had exams but still found the time to write some superb articles. A special note to Johnny B and Count Flapula who really helped by agreeing to do some articles right at the last minute.

Since our last issue, I have personally found it to be a period of adjustment and balancing. With taking over the ownership of Carpe Noctem, it really brought into the light the hard work MV used to put in behind the scenes, and it has been a daunting prospect learning about the forums coding, and the time it takes to carry out the work. It has highlighted a subject that most of us struggle with from time to time, especially administrators, and that's the dreaded RL aka Real Life. It is amazing how much time some spend posting on the forums, and how terrifyingly addictive it can get. I know that personally I have sometimes spent far too much time on the PC, especially when it comes to my beloved TVC, as well as excitedly trying designing and trying out new upgrades for the forum. The other day I started work in the morning and suddenly it was six hours later! That really drilled home to me that whilst Carpe Noctem is a very important part of my life, it's not my whole life. I have children, have a wonderful missus, and I should be enjoying them just as much if not more.

So the message to everyone reading this is, whilst the internet and forums is entertaining, don't let it be everything. Make sure you spend time doing things in RL, spend time with loved ones and friends, and get some fresh air! The last thing you want, is to come out of your internet daze years later, and realise the best part of your life has passed away with nothing to note other than a few thousand posts lost in the billions on the net.

Anyway, that was perhaps a bit deep, so on with the fun stuff! This issue has some exciting things, such as the full Bloodline Armies Beta List, and even better, the whole issue is laid out in the new easy to read landscape format. As usual we have listened to feedback, so I hope this time round is even more enjoyable than previous issues, but if you think something can be improved tell us!

May all your pleasures be soft and slippery.....

Disciple of Nagash

Grave News

News from Carpe Noctem and Beyond

Carpe Noctem Medals Updated

Yes, finally I got round to make some medals for CN's award system. My Photoshop-fu has drastically improved allowing me to render some images that don't look like a two year old made. Currently we have the following medals:

- **The Vampire Council Roleplay Gold Medal** - For players in The Vampire Council Roleplay, who have posted in 15 or more main chapters.



- **The Vampire Council Roleplay Silver Medal** - For players in The Vampire Council Roleplay, who have posted in 5 or more main chapters.



- **The Golden Bat Winner Medal** - For the winner of the Golden Bat Competition.



- **The Golden Bat 2nd Place Medal** - For the 2nd place of the Golden Bat Competition.

(Both medals have either W for Winter or S for Summer, followed by the last two digits of the year. So for example W08 is the Winter 2008 competition.)

There are of course many more to come, the next ones in line being for completed armies. The plan is to have medals for 1000pts, 2000pts and 3000pts (bronze, silver and gold respectively), which will only be awarded upon presentation of a legal army list, pictures of painted and based models, and background fluff of the army.

Links Section

Most of you will have now noticed the new links pages which can be found on the "Links" button on the top Navigation bar. Split into three sections of Fantasy, 40,000 and general, it has handy links to various other sites. We do now have agreements with lots of other forums for a link exchange, and for those we display their banner, hopefully making it easier for everyone to find the forum they are looking for. Please note that at the moment the links section is being updated, hence some sites are missing. However it is possible that some have been missed, so if you do notice, or perhaps you would like your forum linked, please contact Disciple of Nagash.

New Section: Whispers Outside the Crypt

Another agreement brought into place recently, was to exchange news between various forums via RSS feeds. To this end I have created a new section entitled Whispers Outside the Crypt. This forum is linked to the news or announcement sections of affiliated sites, meaning that as soon as they have any news, our members will be sure to know. So no more missing out on a realised webzine, or being surprised to find a site is down for maintenance. There is a slight issue at the moment in regards to the subject link not announcing which site the news is coming from, but that is a coding issue that will be sorted shortly. Again this feature is only enabled for sites CN has an agreement with, and the list is slowly being updated. If you would like to link your news to CN, please contact Disciple of Nagash.

New Banners!

Unless you have been browsing CN with your eyes shut you must have noticed our superb new banners. Created by our resident artist Ryadasu they are a vast improvement on our old banner, and as they are set in rotation, you can see a different banner when you refresh your page. A big" thank you" goes out to Ryadasu for his hard work and effort from myself and the rest of the CN team.

100,000 Post

Yes, in the last few weeks CN reached its 100,000 post. It may not sound too much compared to the other forums, but then remind yourself that CN has only been running since July 2007, it is something to be proud of. To quote MV (who has been popping in now and again to see us)

"CN is currently very "unlive" and bristling. And it's all thanks to you guys. The members, mods and admins who have taken time to discuss the hobby we all love - WHFB and the VC army. To take time and help others who have questions and inspiring all of us with their pictures of their army. We're having fun in the Off Topic section, creating armies for Nagash and our old Bloodlines, and participating in one of the biggest WHFB RPG's at the moment, the TVC!"

I can't say it much better than that, so I will just add my thanks and here's to CN continuing to prosper and grow.

Gallery Currently in Test Phase

It is about time Carpe Noctem was brought up to date with its army showcases, and as such a new modification is currently undergoing testing on the test site at the moment.

It will allow members to upload and edit their photographs, resize, crop, adjust resolution, contrast etc. Perhaps the best feature is that will allow members to tag their photos. This means that when others are looking for pictures just of skeletons for example, they can type in this tag and up will pop lots of pictures to inspire them!

There is still a lot of testing to be done, and with the Christmas period members should not expect to see this implemented until the New Year at the earliest.

There's More to Come

Oh yes! I have been officially bitten by the upgrading bug, and whilst I will be making sure I balance CN with real life, there are many upgrades that we have in the works. Luckily with the handy new test site means no more experimenting on the live site (which was naughty of me anyway), which means that in the near future you should see some more changes, hopefully all for the better. I won't spoil it, but couple of teasers are games, new chat functions and a Zombie Shop.....

The Artefacts of Death: Part Two

Teachings of Abhorash – Basics

Written by MasterSpark

Continuing from where the following issue of The Invocation left off, we return to cover this time the Enchanted and Arcane Items, as well as the wide array of Magic Standards.
Hang ten!

Enchanted Items

First on the list of Enchanted Items is the **Hand of Dust**. This little trinket is a potent one, able to wipe out an entire rank or more from an unsuspecting enemy unit but it is held back by its points cost as well as the relative ease with which it can be neutralized. Like the other bound spells in the Vampiric arsenal, it will also run out of power on a roll of 1 after each and every usage. It can however be held as a surprise until you need it the most and spring it on the enemy once you've drained his dispelling resources with other things. An upside with it is also that since it is an Enchanted Item it can be carried by an otherwise non-arcane character such as a Wight King, giving it an additional element of surprise. There will ultimately be more efficient ways to spend the points but if the dice are with you, the Hand of Dust can severely damage any enemy unit, thinning them out for the close combat phase to come.

The **Rod of Flaming Death** is another Enchanted Item with a bound spell inside of it. This one works almost like a Fireball from the Lore of Fire with a shortened range (remember that GW has FAQ'd it to cause flaming attacks!) and with the added perk of causing a panic test if you manage to score one single wound on the target unit. This can be an effective way of dealing with fast-moving pests who would otherwise love nothing more than to wreak havoc behind your lines, march-blocking you and what-not. It is also useful for flushing out pesky scouts who insist on hiding themselves inside some terrain and harass you with

their ranged weapons. It is advisable to target units outside of the enemy general's aura of leadership to capitalize on the panicking effect. This item share the same downsides as the Hand of Dust above but it is remedied by a slightly lower cost and the undeniable usefulness of a ranged (kind of) weapon.

One of the more audibly "worried-about" items in the list, the **Helm of Commandment** is an item of potentially significant impact. It allows the bearer to transfer his own Weapon Skill to one friendly unit within 12" in any and all close combat phase, provided that he is not locked in combat in base contact with an enemy himself. The majority of Undead units have a rather low natural Weapon Skill and when they're suddenly given the Weapon Skill of a Vampire, the difference will be great. Black Knights and Grave Guard will score more hits with their deadly weapons, Wraiths will use their Great Weapons with a lot more efficiency, even Zombies will be able to fend off many opponents by reducing the enemy's chance to hit them! Simply put, this item will give you a great value for the cost but only if you have a dedicated caster Vampire who will stay back and out of combat. You'll also need to keep him within the rather short range which could put him in harm's way but with some thinking ahead it won't be too much of a worry.

A definitive one use only item, the **Cursed Book** lets the bearer handicap one chosen enemy by reducing his Weapon Skill to null, enabling even Zombies to reliably score hits on the poor fellow. This is an economically affordable item to add that little bit of extra protection for a character. It would probably be better placed on a Vampire Lord than on a Hero, as the latter would be better served by a suit of armour and a magical weapon, whereas a Lord can more often than not fit in something extra

on top of that. It is a good way of handling things such as Dark Elf Assassins, substantially reducing the effectiveness of their attacks. If you happen to find yourself with enough points to add this in, it is a good little extra to have around on a Lord who expects to see some combat.

The last and cheapest item in the list of Enchanted Items, the **Talisman of the Lycni** transforms any Vampire character (whom it is exclusive to) into a fast-moving menace that can sneak through enemy formations to cause disruption behind the opposing lines. This item is cheap enough to let you equip the bearer with enough additional options to turn him into an effective fighter able to target the enemy's softer units, such as small missile units and War Machines, with comfortable ease. It is also a good way of raising a unit or two of Zombies in uncomfortable positions to harass the enemy with. It is also a viable strategy to keep him inside a unit of infantry without any evidence of him having the item and then suddenly make a fast dash into a vulnerable target within 18", a sure surprise for any unwary foe! There aren't really any downsides to this cheap item but do keep in mind that as soon as you bring this character close to the enemy he too will be unable to make a march move. This could leave him in a compromising location if you don't plan for it.

Arcane Items

The ultimate in stylish accessories for the accomplished spell caster, the **Skull Staff** is both expensive and powerful. Granting a bonus to both casting *and* dispelling makes this gadget something to truly consider for those who wish to run a caster Lord/General. It should ideally only be used on a Vampire Lord of the caster variety, as its points cost will prohibit either the offensive or defensive measures of the wielder. You would also want to capitalize on the investment by purchasing the more magic-orientated bloodline powers, further defining the Skull Staff as a tool of the consummate Wizard. A good buy, as long as you're intent on running the right kind of character for it.



Model by Werecat Youth

The **Staff of Damnation** is another of the bound spells in the Vampires' arsenal and it too is one of potent ability. If it makes it through the dispelling attempts of your enemy it will let any Undead model within 12" make one immediate additional attack, which will not count towards the same round of combat. It is obvious that this item increases in usability depending on what kind of troops you have around it – having a bunch of Skeletons slap their bony wrists at the enemy won't make much difference. Ponder instead the effect of an entire [i]row[/i] of Great Weapon-wielding Grave Guard or the like making their mark! The points cost is slightly prohibiting but not unbearably so due to the available bloodline powers for defence. There are also a few other bound spells that would be more consistently useful which might bump this one off the priority list but it will still remain a powerful tool if you have the right kind of troops to take full advantage of it.

While on the topic of useful bound spells, you will be hard pressed to find one more strongly so than the **Book of Arkhan**. Giving you guaranteed access to Vanhel's Danse Macabre outside of the Forbidden Lore and Necromancers, there will rarely be an opportunity where you wish that you didn't have this helpful thing around. Simply put, there are little to no downsides to this artefact – its cost measures quite well with the Enchanted Shield (for example) which grants the carrier the opportunity for quite a serviceable armour save!

In the list for common arcane items we have the **Staff of Sorcery** which will aid you in your dispelling efforts. It is debated whether or not this bonus will stack together with that of the Skull Staff but in either way, having that extra little pip added to your dispel dice won't often go wrong. As with many other things in our list of magic items however, there will often be items of greater priority to have in your armies before this one.

The **Sceptre De Noirot** is an item of awesome imagery – allowing the wielder to raise untold hordes of Zombies won't ever be unsatisfying! However, remember that this only works with the Raise Dead spell and not with the Invocation of Nehek, even if it too is used on your hordes of Zombies. Raising unit after unit of Zombies will often not be of much

necessity, even if you will raise a significant number of them with each successful cast. Remember also that each newly created unit is worth an additional handful of victory points. Getting too carried away with raising new units of Zombies can become somewhat of a hindrance for yourself as well, which is why I'll give this item a rather cold reception, even if it does have its uses.

Dispel Scrolls, the ubiquitous final word in the field of dispelling. These are obviously quite useful for countering the big and flashy spells that the more magically inclined opponent might throw at you and will rarely go through a battle without pulling their weight. I wouldn't consider them a necessity unless you're positive to go up against the super-spells that gets thrown about today (such as the Infernal Gateway, Spirit of the Forge and the Curse of the Horned Rat) which you would definitely want to stop from hitting and possibly destroying something pricy in one fell swoop. The Scrolls' situation is also remedied by the fact that all standard Vampires are Wizards, letting them focus on close combat through the bloodline powers and still carry a Scroll or two around (remember that both Scrolls and Stones can be carried in multiple quantities) for emergency use.

An item of dubious use, the **Crimson Gem of Lahmia** opens up some potentially interesting uses for the wielder. An increased output of power dice is never a bad thing but when the price asked is to compromise the safety of the user, the choice just doesn't seem as clearly cut anymore. One situation where this item could be put to good use is if you happen to have the special character Isabella von Carstein present in the same army, as her magical goblet will allow the now-wounded user of the Crimson Gem to recuperate automatically but even then, I still have my doubts. This gem is best left at home, in my reckoning.

For a Wizard to be packing one or two **Power Stones** is to have the ability to go into overdrive when casting a select spell or two. This can be widely useful for both high and low-level casters alike, although I find them easier to fit onto the latter due to the tasty selection of items that the former have available to them. A very useful and cheap set up is to

give a couple of Power Stones to a Necromancer and purchase the Vanhel's Danse Macbre spell as default – this will let him throw a healthy amount of dice into a couple of attempts at throwing the spell, drastically increasing your chances of getting it through. All in all, these are a good buy unless you plan to spend your time raising the dead and calling on the Invocation of Nehek.

The **Black Periapt** is an item with a usefulness that outstrips its cost by far. The option of storing a single unused power or dispel dice and pluck it out as an additional one of the opposite kind is a good one and due to its low cost it won't be hard for you to fit it in. Whether you need to boost your offense or strengthen your defence, the Black Periapt will help you do that the economically sound way. This one is recommended!



Models by Syrme

Magic Standards

With its large points cost, **The Drakenhof Banner** sits proudly as the most exclusive flag to be chosen as your army's official battle standard. Granting the Regeneration special rule to an entire unit is a very influential addition (especially when brought forth inside a unit of elite troops such as Grave Guard or Black Knights) since it can also be used to save against wounds suffered by crumbling, turning an already solid block of warriors into an almost unstoppable fighting force. However, there are a few definitive counters to keep an eye out for if you decide to use this item: the special rules for Killing Blows and Flaming Attacks both negate the regeneration save and these two special attributes have become more and more common these days. Both the Dark Elves and Daemons of Chaos (to name a few examples) are capable of throwing out a large number of either Killing Blows or Flaming Attacks on command, making your pricy investment void. These two armies are far from the only two that can produce such special attacks and overconfidence in the resilience brought by The Drakenhof Banner can backfire on you if the banner bearer is dropped by an Assassin or some such, leaving unit in a no doubt tricky situation.

The Flag of Blood Keep is a kind of (cheaper) variation of the costly banner above, granting the unit it is with a constant protection against any and all ranged attacks. As the name, points cost and background story suggests, it is well suited to be used with a unit of Blood Knights, giving these pricy models a well-needed defensive measure against spells and other powerful ranged attacks that will inevitably seek to destroy them. The downside to this banner, whether carried by a Battle Standard Bearer or a unit of Blood Knights, is of course that it won't grant you any additional bonuses once you enter close combat – which is where the Vampire Counts cause the vast majority of their damage, after all. It is still a worthwhile consideration if you know that you'll be going up against some heavy artillery, especially if it is of the flaming kind that would negate a potential regeneration save.

Whenever you decide to bring a unit of Grave Guard of Black Knights to the field, handing them the **Banner of the Barrows** will never be a poor choice. Granting all Wights in the unit (that is Grave Guard, Black Knights *and* Wight Kings!) a constant positive modifier on their to-hit rolls, this banner increases the effectiveness of these units against any and all enemies. It also meshes very well with the earlier mentioned Helm of Commandment, making it possible for the Wights in the unit to hit the enemy on a 2+. There's quite simply no real downside to this item aside from the relatively high points cost. Highly recommended!

The **Screaming Banner** is an artefact of some potential, provided that it is used against the right type of opponent. By forcing the enemy units to take their fear test on 3D6 (and discard the lowest roll) increases their risk of failure by quite a margin which can easily hamper their efforts pretty much completely. However, there are a lot of units which are either Immune to Psychology or have some other kind of protection against fear out and about today. A high leadership value will also dent this item's efficiency to a large extent, making it best to be used out on the flanks, away from the enemy general and his inspiring aura.

Another aid to increase the offensive output of your units, the **Royal Standard of Strigos** bestows the Hatred special rule upon the unit. In my own humble opinion, this item is best given to a unit of cavalry since they usually rely on breaking the enemy unit on the initial round of combat, and re-rolling misses gives them a good chance to score a good few number of more hits. The cost of this item is negligible for its effect but Hatred does come with an unsightly downside – being forced to pursue and/or overrun defeated enemies in combat. This can be used against you by a clever and cunning opponent who might use a sacrificial unit as bait to get your cavalry into disadvantageous situations.

The **Icon of Vengeance** is an item that I wouldn't even consider using if it were up to me to decide. For this banner to have any effect you'd need to lose your *general* - the one model that you should strive to not ever lose! Still, the bonus granted is sure to come in handy, although you might well be in too much trouble for this banner to make any significant difference. I'd recommend this to be left at home, really.

The **Banner of the Dead Legion** on the other hand, is an interesting item. This handy little flag (available to every unit allowed to hold a magical banner, by the way) is an economical way of ensuring you the bonus point for Combat Resolution from Outnumbering. The effect is of especially great use when given to a unit of cavalry – each model will have a unit strength of 4! This will let a unit of 5 Black Knights (for example) claim a combined unit strength of 20, enough to send many a unit susceptible to fear packing from a flank attack. This banner is a worthwhile choice for most units, only possibly overshadowed by other, more directly useful options such as the Royal Standard of Strigoi and Banner of the Barrows.

In somewhat of the same vein as the Icon of Vengeance, the **Cursed Pennant of Mousillon** requires the destruction of your own property before you'll get any mileage out of it, although not to the same extreme degree. The damage that this banner will cause to your opponent will barely be recognizable and the loss of the sacrificial unit to carry the banner will likely hit you harder in the end. I'm afraid that I'll have to recommend against this one as well.

From the list of common magic items we have the old reliable **War Banner**, always ready to serve you in a useful way. The War Banner will never be a buy you'll have to regret – having an additional point of combat resolution helps you out in more ways than one. On one hand you'll be more likely to defeat your enemy in combat and on the other you'll lose one less model to crumbling if you're on the losing side. A good buy for any unit, although I prefer to keep it with a unit of Skeletons since the higher-standing units tend to have other, more specialized banners available.

Letting you take advantage of a fourth rank bonus instead of just three, the **Banner of the Endless Nightmare** can be of good use for a large unit of Skeleton Warriors to increase the potency of their static combat resolution (fits in well with their points allowance as well, heheh). The downside to it is, of course, that you'll need to actually have a unit large enough to take advantage of a fourth rank bonus! If you have the two

available, I'd recommend opting for the War Banner in place of this one – it'll give you the same benefit plus more and without a need for that fourth rank.

The **Standard of Hellish Vigour** is a good way to bring some more strategical flexibility when it comes to deploying and moving your forces. You will sometimes find yourself with one unit too few with the Vampire special rule which might in turn limit the manoeuvrability of your entire army. A unit of Black Knights with this banner (it *is* more well suited to a unit of cavalry than, say, a block of Grave Guard. These would need the support of some other unit to stop the enemy from taking advantage of the unwieldiness of a large unit of infantry) can be deployed on a far-away flank and may still move about at full speed without having a Varghulf (for example) devoted to keep them marching. This one is a recommended buy as soon as you think you'll find yourself short on Vampires to spread the aura of command.

The **Standard of Everlasting Death** is a not too expensive way to give a unit a little bit more resistance against wounds suffered through crumbling yet, despite its low cost, I'm still not keen on its use when viewed in a larger perspective – those points could instead have gone towards adding another member or two to the unit. I just don't see much point to the effect of this banner, although the advantage is easy to see – easy to see but unnecessary if you ask me. Like with the Banner of the Endless Nightmare above, if you happen to still have the War Banner free for use, I'd definitely recommend it over this one. It'll give you the same advantage but guaranteed, as well as helping you out in the opposite direction as well.

The last and cheapest on the list of magic banners, and actually the very last artefact in the entire section, the **Banner of Hellfire** blesses the carrying unit and any joined characters with magical flaming attacks for a small price. If you happen to know that you'll be going up against anything with the Regeneration special rule or with a ward save negotiable by use of magical attacks, this banner will give you some very pleasing results (given that you'll actually be able to engage said banner-

carrying unit with the preferred enemy, that is). Beware of venturing into unknown tournaments where you might run into a group or two of High Elves though, since their dastardly Dragon Armour will stop this entire unit dead in its track (har-har).

And with this we've reached the end of the list of available Artefacts of Death. I hope that I've managed to enlighten your vision to some potential uses of these gadgets, although I'm sure that I haven't been able to cover them all completely – we all think differently in regards to different things! Anyway, I hope that the read has been enjoyable and that you'll find much fortune in whatever choice of magic items you'll decide on.

Good luck and happy gaming!

The Daemonic Legion

Chaos Dwarfs Online

THE CHAOS STAR

Your Warhammer Fantasy
Chaos Army Forums

Chamber of the Everchosen

The Herdstone

check out rites of war

Rites of War has an open & friendly atmosphere to people looking for that much less structured experience. Like other sites, Row is about meeting people of like attitudes and is open to Players of any calling looking for a board of friends.

We have a small, but active membership and are a tight knit group.

Row is akin to your local Pub more than the local GW store. This isn't a replacement for other sites but an accessory to.

We offer our membership many services. From Army Blogs and contests. to an active Off-Topic. If Row sounds like a place for you. Head over and draft a pint on my tab. - Servius

ritesofwar.org



Vampire Painting Guide

Written by the Dark Sheep

The Dark Art

At the head of our armies are the vampires, predators of the night. They lead their vast dead legions against the terrified defenders of the living, and few indeed dare face these ancient monsters. Perhaps this is because they know they cannot best them, or perhaps they are afraid of what they might self become.

In this article I will be talking about not only how to paint vampire skin, but also what makes these creatures stand out from the average living man. I also provide an optional path for those who might not wish to mix that many paints in such inaccurate ratios.

You will need the following paints:

- Scorched Brown
- Vomit Brown
- Space Wolves Grey
- Leviathan Purple
- Skull White

Or alternatively you could use:

- Tallarn Flesh
- Space Wolves Grey
- Leviathan Purple
- Dheneb Stone
- Skull White

Step 1

The first thing I did was apply three thin coats of a 1:1:2 mix of Scorched Brown, Vomit Brown and Space Wolves Grey. This mix of colours is very similar to the foundation paint, Tallarn Flesh, but because skin is such a delicate thing to paint, it looks best when the paint is applied as thin as possible. Thus I prefer using this mix to the somewhat heavier foundation paint. Though the difference is only marginal, so basing the model on foundation paints should make little difference, if at all.



Step 2

The next step was to highlight all the raised areas on the skin of the model with the same mix as above, but with four parts Space Wolves Grey added. If you have decided to go the foundation paint route, a 1:1 mix of Tallarn Flesh and Space Wolves Grey would produce the same colour.

On this model I have made a progressive transition from the base coat by using very thin coats of paint to build up the colour. Building up the colour will make the skin appear smoother, while a single heavy highlight will make the skin appear sharper and less pleasing to look at.



Step 3

Skin will look different, depending on in which state of decay it is. Living creatures are warm, and the skin will often reflect this by having red/brown shades. Decayed skin on the other hand, will often have shades of greens and yellows or even blue. Vampires are walking corpses with blood pumping through their veins, and this naturally affects the shades and hues of their skin. If you inspect your wrist closely, it is possible to pick out the blue/purple outlines of your veins. This colour is naturally a good choice for how you want your vampire's skin to be tinted.

Thus, the next step was to apply a very thin wash (or a "glaze" if you want) of Leviathan Purple to the model. By watering the wash down, the skin will be tinted purple while it still retains traces of the original colour. In addition this glaze will help make the shades and highlights become slightly more even, giving basically the same effect as blending.



Step 4

The next thing was to use the mix from the earlier steps to continue building up the colour. Therefore I added first one and then two parts Skull White, making a final mix of the following ratios: 1:1:6:2 Scorched Brown, Vomit Brown, Space Wolves Grey and Skull white. If you have decided to take the foundation paint route, Dheneb Stone is a very similar colour that will act as a good highlight to the Tallarn Flesh.

After the glaze it is important to continue using the same basic mix as in the earlier steps to build up a good, consistent skin colour. The advantage to this is that all the colours, except the purple glaze, are based on the same basic mix, and thus all the different shades and highlights will have a strong unified effect.



Step 5

To finish off the skin I made a couple of subtle highlights and glazes to draw the eyes towards areas of interest. Mostly this effort was put in the vampire's face; highlighting things like the lip, brows and cheek bones, and giving things like the eyelids and the shadows of the nose and ears another thin glaze of Leviathan Purple. This added contrast makes the face an interesting focal point.



The rest of the model

I finished the model off by painting the armour in a solid red colour. As red is a closely related to purple this makes for a good choice, and at the same time the red helps establish a bloody feel to the vampire. The other colours were either dark as in the black cloak or bright as in the rock and bones. These colours were naturally muted so as to not take the focus away from the more important areas around the face.



The Vampire Council

User Projects

The activity on the Vampire Council has in many ways been a surprised to me over the past few months. As no doubt many of you know, many role-plays tend to start very well and then slow down into steady posting, or in some unlucky circumstances stop.

However this is not the case, as the posting in the TVC has grown an enormous amount recently, even to the point plots there were supposed to be just one chapter have been forced to break into multiple ones to accommodate the amount of posting!

Of course this is not something to moan about, and I more than pleased that the role-play continues to thrive and prosper. Of course that was helped by some of the exciting plot twists that recently happened, one of them being the culmination of over a years planning and build up!

As I keep on saying to new members who join the TVC, one of the best things you can do to help posting is to think ahead. If you have a guideline of how your character is going to develop, how their personal relationships are going to turn out, it makes it much more easier to post. You don't have to tell other members so it can still be a surprise (the only person you must tell about plots / plans in the TVC is Disciple of Nagash to ensure there are no clashes), though of course it is even better if two or more players plan a secret plot together!

One easy way to do this is to think of the background for your created character. Most people can do this without too much trouble, and end up with a rich history that explains how their character came to be. Now when you start to roleplay, why not start your character off at an earlier point in their history? Unless it will clash with specific Warhammer dates or events, it is a great starting point as you already have it planned

out how your character grows and develops, and chances are the roleplay will help you develop that background even further.

As usual I always encourage new players to join the TVC, but sadly the role-plays end has appeared on the horizon. With the remaining plots and ideas there is about another six months remaining, bringing the TVC proudly over the two year mark but it doesn't end there.....oh no....

The Sequel

That's right. Such is the popularity of the TVC, that after receiving many demands to make sure there was a sequel, the planning has already begun!

Taking place ten years after the end of the existing roleplays end, the next instalment promises to be a more world spanning affair, with many surprises and shocks instore. Of course it will be following the alternate timeline created by the TVC, so any who wish to join would at least need to skim the summary (for example Mannfred von Carstein being fully destroyed and Simon von Carstein replacing him as Count of Sylvania), however I hope that many will choose to join in what will doubt be a role-play that is as successful as the TVC, if not more so.

So as usual if you want to join the TVC, either in the last few chapters against the might of Nagash, or get ready for the sequel, then pop along to the forum at the following link:

<http://www.vampirecounts.net/forumdisplay.php?fid=43>

The Legion of Nagash

User Projects

Well amidst the rumours (again!) of a possible Nagash campaign next year, along with a possible new Undead / Necromancer army, the work on the Legion of Nagash has been carrying on as normal.

Unlike the Bloodlines Armies, the Legion is made from scratch, and thus has more possibility of being over-powered, have errors or other possible issues. So to try and nip this early in the bud, before the rules are introduced for play testing, there will be a review stage. This will look at the existing list we have, the overall theme of the army, whether it is balanced correctly, has good strengths as well as reasonable weaknesses. Once we have it as good as we can make, we can then move the list (which has been over 2 years in the making!!) into its beta play testing phase.

So not much news in this one this month, so instead I will leave you with the current army list of the Legion of Nagash....

Special Characters

The Body and Spirit of Nagash

The Nine Dreadlords of Nagash (including Arkhan the Black)

The Crone in the Black Pyramid

Characters

Zenith Lord – Wight-style lord level character

Disciple of Nagash – Lord level caster (with a very cool name!)

Revenant – Fast but fragile ethereal lord.

Zenith Prince - Wight-style hero level character

Nagashi Captain – Human hero

Mortuary Priest – Hero level caster

Reaper – Ethereal wraith-like assassain

Mounts

Ancient Bone Dragon – Lord level mount, similar in power to Star Dragon

Dragon Shade – Lord level mount, ethereal

Fellbeast – Lord and hero level mount, evil version of the Griffon

Greater Carrion – Flying mount for all characters

Arabian Warsteed – Mount for Nagashi characters and cavalry

Dead Horse – Standard mount for undead characters and cavalry

Core

Skeletons

Zombies / Zombie Launcher

Favoured Ones – Intelligent skirmishing ghouls

Cultists – Fanatical human followers of Nagash

Special

Black Riders – Fast light human cavalry

Pinnacle Knights – Medium-heavy wight cavalry

Pinnacle Guard – Medium-heavy wight infantry

Locust Swarms – Weak flying swarm / annoyance unit

Wraithwisp – Ethereal hammer swarm

Bone Thrower – Bolt thrower style warmachine

Rare

Black Shards – Magical support war machine

Spectral Cavalry – Hard hitting cavalry

Ancient Warrior – Monster style unit

If you would like to help feel free to visit the Legion of Nagash at the following link: <http://www.vampirecounts.net/forumdisplay.php?fid=37>

Bloodline Armies

User Projects

It has been a very exciting time for the Bloodline Armies Project. Not only have we been receiving feedback, but we have finalised the Optional Armies section. This means that excluding the Special Characters (which are no more than an interesting extra), the Bloodline Armies project has fully completed its first phase! It has been a tiring but nonetheless interesting and productive nine months since we started this project in March, but the end result looks well worth the effort.

Current Feedback

Following our recent campaign we have received some feedback regarding the stat changes, and the preliminary results look very promising. So far there has not been any complaints that the powers are unbalanced or overpowered, and most players (both VC player and their opponents) have reported the changes play well, giving the army a much more fluffy feel for their chosen bloodline, whilst not too awkward to use. One report even went as far to say that the opponent preferred playing the Bloodline list over the standard army list even though he lost!

Beta Version Ready to Test

So now we move into the Beta phase. This phase is where all the powers, stat changes and army lists are finished and ready for complete testing all together. This will no doubt be the most difficult phase to get past, as whilst the components themselves may be ok, it is how they interact together that can cause the problems. Of course we can't know this without playtesters, so we are asking all of you to help out!

To this end every person that playtests will be entered into a draw with the following conditions:

- The entree must have played a minimum of 3 games with the Bloodline Armies.

- The entree must provide the list they used, and the list they played against.
- The entree must provide full feedback from themselves and their opponent in regards to the stat changes, powers and army list.

The winner of the draw will then be able to choose any miniature (s) (it does not have to from GW) up to the total value of £40.00, which will be shipped to them direct.

So no doubt you are asking how do you do to become a playtester? Well the first part is easy. Over the next few pages you will see the full rules for the Bloodlines Armies. So all you have to do is choose the line you want to use and away you go! For some of the new units in the Optional Army List you may need to proxy models of course. For easy reference if you want to print the rules out for easy access during battle, just print pages 23- 44. Finally once you have done that just visit the following link and enter your results in the appropriate thread:

<http://www.vampirecounts.net/forumdisplay.php?fid=64>

Credits

I would like to say a big thank you and well done to everyone who has been involved in this so far (takes a deep breath):
Arion, Bishop, Capt Rubber Ducky, Crimson, Christophe von Carstein, Danceman, Dark Lord Nihilus, Evil Clown, Fallen Angel, Fodderboy, Goulking88, Lord of Ravens, MasterSpark, Marcus Von Drac, Master Vampire, Nicodemus, Onikaigo, Oracle, Order of the Blood Dragon, Skaramak von Carstein Swissdictator, Sweeney Todd, The Dark Sheep, The Flaming Hand, The Pale Lady, Trentonator, Vekarin the Dark Bladed, Zaak the Uncanny.....and a sorry to those I might have missed!

Bloodlines Optional Army Lists

Beta Version

It's taken a lot of hard work but finally we have the beta playtesting list for the bloodline armies. Now I know you are no doubt eager to start writing up your list, but there are some guidelines that need to be taken into account. So before you carry on to the next few pages, take some time to read the following.

Stat Changes and Bloodline Powers

The stat changes and powers in the next few pages are designed to work with each other, not separately. Whilst it might seem like fun to use the Blood Dragon stat changes and then try and apply the normal powers out of the Vampire Counts book, all you will create is an unbalanced and unfair list.

Bearing that in mind, you can use these changes with a normal army list, you do not need to use the Optional Army Lists. They should work fine with an army list chosen using the normal guidelines in the Vampire Counts army book.

Minor Bloodline Powers

These powers can be used by any bloodline in addition to their own specific ones. However they still use up the powers plot allowance as normal.

Necromancers

As with the above rules, you can use the Necromancer rules and powers with a standard list, however in this case it is recommended to use the Optional Army list, as it is balanced more to make up for their weakness compared to Vampires.

Optional Army Lists

These lists must be used with the stat changes and powers of that bloodline. They are not designed to work with the normal Vampire Counts powers, and an attempt to do so may result in unfair and unbalanced lists.

Be Fluffy!!

The whole concept behind these lists was to create rules that allowed players to once again wield their favourite bloodlines. It was not to create loopholes for players to create overpowered monsters, or ridiculous lists. So please bear that in mind when using these rules.

Feedback

Of course we want to know how we did. Anyone who provides full feedback is entered into a draw to win £40.00 worth of models (subject to conditions).

So please, visit Carpe Noctem at the following link, and help use improve and produce a final set of rules for the Bloodline Armies:

<http://www.vampirecounts.net/forumdisplay.php?fid=64>

Finally, have fun!!

Vampires

Stat and Rules

Lahmian Stat Changes

-1 to Weapon Skill

+2 to Initiative

Cannot take mundane armour options.

Cannot take mundane weapon options unless using the options in the optional Lahmian Army List

-1 Leadership to any enemy models in Base to Base contact with one or more Lahmians.

Blood Dragon Stat Changes

+2 to Weapon Skill

Generates -1 spell (hero's will only know Invocation of Nehek).

Vampire automatically comes equipped with Full Plate Armour plus one of the following:

Hand Weapon & Shield

Great weapon

2x Hand Weapons

Lance & Shield and Barding if mounted.

Note: As Dread Knight is no longer an option the cost for a nightmare is +10pts.

Carstein Stat Changes

None - they use the standard stats and options as per the Vampire Counts army book.

Strigoi Stat Changes

+1 Attack

5+ ward save

Hatred.

May not take any mundane / magical equipment.

May not take mounts of any kind.

Necrarch Stat Changes

-2 to Weapon Skill

-1 Initiative

May not wear mundane armour.

Cannot take mundane weapon options

+1 to call casting rolls.

Necromancers

Stats and Rules

Due to the limited options for Necromancers in the Vampire Counts Army, those wishing to use them in their own army should instead use the following rules, including the additional Magic Items.

Master Necromancer - 190pts

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
4	3	3	3	4	3	3	1	8

Weapons & Armour:
Hand Weapon.

Magic

The Master Necromancer is a Level 3 Wizard. However he does not function like a normal Wizard. He generates Power Dice and Dispel dice normally, but the spells he knows are not linked to his Magic level. Instead he automatically knows the 3 Necromancy spells from the Lore of Vampires.

Options:

May be upgraded to a level 4 Wizard for +25 pts. Note that upgrading his magic Level does not give him any more spells, it merely increases the number of Power dice he generates.

May Ride either an Abyssal Terror, a Skeletal Steed or a Corpse Cart.

May Choose up to 100pts of Magic Items from the Common or Vampire Counts Magic Items lists and/or may take up to 100pts of Familiars, however the combined total of Magic Items and Familiars may not exceed 150 pts.

Special rules

Undead, Corpse Master, Strength of Will

Necromancer - 90pts

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
4	3	2	3	3	2	3	1	7

Weapons & Armour:
Hand Weapon.

Magic:

The Necromancer is a Level 1 Wizard. However he does not function like a normal Wizard. He generates Power Dice and Dispel dice normally, but the spells he knows are not linked to his Magic level. Instead he automatically knows 1 of the 3 Necromancy spells from the Lore of Vampires (player's choice which spell is chosen).

Options

May purchase 1 or both remaining necromancy spells for 15pts each (players choice which spell(s)). May upgrade to level 2 for 25pts - however this only increases his PD, it does not give him an extra spell.

May Ride either a Skeletal Steed or a Corpse Cart.

May choose up to 50pts of Magic Items from the Common or Vampire Counts Magic Items lists and/or may take up to 50pts if Familiars, however the combined total of Magic Items and Familiars may not exceed 75pts

Special rules

Undead, Corpse Master, Strength of Will

Necromancer Special Rules

Corpse Master

As he has progressed further down the twisted path of Necromancy, this individual has rotted away until he is more dead than alive, and feels perfectly at home surrounded by the rank flesh of the undead.

The Necromancer may join Units of Zombies. Additionally, while in a unit of Zombies, as long as there is one or more zombies left, any challenges issued by enemy characters may be accepted by a zombie rather than the Necromancer.

Strength of Will

As his knowledge of Necromancy grows, so too does his control over the undead, meaning that the most experienced Necromancers can control their servants as completely as vampires.

At the beginning of each turn, the Master Necromancer or Necromancer may take a Leadership test. If passed, units within 12" of the Master Necromancer or 6" of the Necromancer may march as per the Vampire rule. If failed, neither character has the vampire rule for that turn. If the Master Necromancer chooses not to take a Leadership test undead units within 6" may still march as per the Vampire rule.

Necromancer Specific Magic Items

Vaporous Cloak - 40pts

This cloak appears as a swirling cloud and seems to continually shift and move. Such a distraction is almost impossible to ignore, and enemies attempting to strike the wearer find themselves confounded by tendrils of mist, brushing their blows aside.

Light armour. If the necromancer is in a unit, enemy models attempting to strike the necromancer in close combat require 6's to hit. Additionally for any results that are not a 6 but would have been sufficient to hit the model, these hits are worked out against the unit he is with instead. Weapons that would hit automatically require a 4+ to hit him and other results are worked out against the unit. However for these rules to take effect, the wearer must be in a unit with at least 5 other models, not including other characters.

Dark Barrier - 50pts

The necromancer is surrounded by ribbons of dark energy that flow round him, moving to intercept any blows that head towards him.

Light armour. This confers a 5+ ward save to the necromancer. The necromancer may sacrifice his own Power/Dispel dice - 2 and 1 respectively - in the appropriate magic phase to grant any unit he is with a 5+ ward until the following magic phase.

Vampires

Minor Powers

The following powers may be taken by vampires of any bloodline, however they still count towards the vampires Bloodline Powers allowance as normal.

Spectral Form

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Hunter in the Dark

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Abomination - 25pts.

The very existence of the vampire is an affront to nature, permeating an aura of undeath so profound that it causes mortals to cry out in anguish and flee in terror.

The vampire causes terror.

Vampiric Aura - 25 pts

The Vampire controls his undead minions from his mind. As such, minions close to him prove more resilient to crumbling.

Undead models within 6" which are in close combat suffer 1 less casualty from crumbling. This is cumulative with other effects such as a Battle Standard Bearer, however it cannot stack with other *Vampiric Auras*.

Quicksilver - 20pts

The vampire is strikes swifter than a snake, endless attacks crushing the foe before them.

The vampire has +1Attack on his profile.

Dark Resistance - 15 pts

This vampire's body is so wasted that poison finds no method of travel, and is rendered void.

Vampire is immune to Poison.

Lord of the Dead - 15pts

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Summon Creatures of the Night - 15pts

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Summon Ghouls - 15pts

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Blood Dragons

Bloodline Powers

Master of Blades - 100pts

This vampire has trained purely in combat for hundreds, if not thousands of years, and has unmatched in combat save for Abhorash himself....

The vampire has Weapons Skill 10, Initiative 10 whilst in combat only, +2 Attacks, may re-roll misses in combat and also has the Killing Blow special rule. He knows one less spell than he normally would.

Unliving Legend - 55pts

Such are the tales of this vampire, his fellows obey his every word and would lay down their life for him

Any Blood Knight unit joined by this character are not forced to charge or pursue as per the normal rules for frenzy, though they still gain the additional attacks. They will automatically pass any restraint tests. In addition the "Look Out Sir!" roll may be re-rolled if failed and works as long as there is 1 Blood Knight model remaining.

Red Fury

As per the Vampire Counts Book.

Master-strike - 45pts

Such are the power of this vampire's blows, one strike can tear his foe asunder!

The vampire has the Killing Blow special rule and may re-roll any to wound rolls.

Defender - 20pts

The warrior can create a wall of glittering steel that none but the most skilled can pass.

One enemy model in Base to Base contact loses one attack, which may take the enemy model down to zero attacks.

Honour or Death - 20pts

Many have regretted accepting a challenge from a creature of death.

Any model who issues a challenge that is accepted by a vampire with the above power, or accepts a challenge must take a Leadership test at -1. If failed they must act as if they refused a challenge as per the Rulebook.

Does not affect units that are Immune to Psychology

Horse Master - 15pts

The bond between this knight and his steed is unbreakable. Such is his example that his fellow knights cannot but help follow him.

If riding a barded mount the model does not suffer the -1 restriction to their movement due to the barding. If in a unit of Knights the benefit is also conferred on the unit.

Strength of Steel - 10pts

Such is the vampire's martial prowess that he is able to strike at the precise moment when it will cause the most carnage.

The Vampire has +1 strength the turn he charges.

Don Carstein

Bloodline Powers

True Blood - 100pts

"The blood of this vampire flows as powerful and strong as Vashanesh himself"

This vampire may purchase The Carstein Ring for 50pts. The roll to see if he is resurrected is automatically passed if/when he dies, though he must be resurrected in a unit as normal. In addition the vampire gains a 4+ ward save.

Master of Storms - 55 points

Such is this vampire's power that even the winds and the clouds must submit to him.

Instead of moving in the movement phase the vampire can try to call a storm. Roll a D6, on a 1 nothing happens. On a 2-6 the vampire summons fierce winds. Until the beginning of the vampire's next turn all shooting is at a -1 to hit and all war machines must re-roll their artillery dice, and all flying creatures must use their ground movement. The storm ends if the vampire moves in any way, is engaged in close combat, is wounded or slain.

Beast Affinity - 50pts

The Carsteins' have always have an affinity with creatures of the night

Once per battle the vampire uses this power at the start of his turn, to summon D3+4 wounds of Dire Wolves. Choose any point within 12", and no closer than 8" to an enemy unit. Place a wolf model on it, and then form the rest of the unit around it. The unit may face any direction and may move as normal. The vampire may also heal D3 wounds per casting of Invocation of Nehek on Dire Wolf units, instead of the normal limit of 1 wound.

The Rightful Ruler - 50pts

"Such is the aura of command this vampire exudes, that others are eclipsed in his presence"

Enemy units within 12" of the *Rightful Ruler* are unable to benefit from the their General's leadership and/or the Battle Standard Bearer reroll ability. Units that are joined by the General and/or BSB still gain the usual benefit(s) conferred by said character(s).

Walking Death

As per the VC army book

Aura of Command - 25pts

The arrogance of this vampire ensures that the troops under his command never stop

The range of the vampire rule for this character is extended by 6"

Wolf Form - 20pts

The vampire can change its appearance into a wolf at will

The vampire gains movement 9"

Silver Tongued - 10pts

The charm and wit of the Carsteins' is such they can attract others of their own kin to join their cause

Only one vampire may have this power. The player may then choose one vampire from another blood line as one of their hero choices, with the appropriate stat and rule changes, bloodline powers etc. The different bloodline vampire may not be the army general or Battle Standard Bearer.

Lahmian

Bloodline Powers

Divine Beauty - 100pts

No creature, mortal or otherwise can resist this creature's seduction.

Any enemy units that move or appear through other means within 18" of the vampire at any time, and can draw Line of Sight to the vampire must take a Leadership test on -2. If failed the unit must immediately stop, providing it is not in impassable terrain, another unit etc. If it is in such a position the unit must clear the obstruction and then stop. They may also not shoot in the shooting phase for that turn if applicable.

Whenever the unit attempts to move again (including compulsory movement) they must test again if the above conditions are still met. If failed the unit still cannot move. If the unit passes the above Ld test at any time they can move as normal. If they unit is charged at any time they can fight as normal. This power does affect units that are ItP

Midnight Dancer: 50pts

"As the dance continues the on looking crowd can do naught but to stare in admiration, her dance even deadening the most cold minds as she weaves move after move like a perfect spiders web".

At the start of any combat any model wishing to attack the vampire must pass a leadership test at -1 LD, even if ItP, unbreakable or otherwise immune to leadership based tests. If failed the model may not make any attacks at all and is hit automatically in combat until the next round of combat.

Aura of Dark Majesty

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Innocence Lost- 40pts

Who could think such an innocent and fragile creature could pose a threat?
Confers the ASF ability.

Behind the Scenes - 35pts

These beguiling vampires have infiltrated all levels of society, making their presence known when their enemy confronts them.

Roll D6 for each enemy character at the start of the battle. On a roll of 5+ the model loses one wound, no saves of any kind allowed.

Seduction - 30pts

Sometimes before battle, a lucky soldier will be visited by a beautiful woman offering unearthly pleasures. Only the strongest can resist and see her true nature....

Nominate one enemy character after deployment and roll 1D6. On 2-6 you may redeploy the character in another of the enemies units, following the normal rules for deployment. If the character was not in a unit to begin with, or may not join a unit then he may be moved to anywhere in the enemies deployment area. On a roll of 1 the vampire takes a wound with no saves of any kind allowed.

Overflowing Coffers - 30pts

Renowned for their hedonism, Lahmians' treasure jewellery and hoard ancient artefacts. When called to war they can lay their hands on any item imaginable.

The Lahmian may take an extra 30pts of magic items.

Vanity of the Dead - 25pts

Only the foolish would dare hurt a Lahmian, for to hurt their perfect looks will incur a wrath like no other.

For each unsaved wound suffered by the Lahmian, she immediately gains an additional attack. These extra attacks are lost if the Lahmian's wounds are healed

Necrarch

Bloodline Powers

Bloodline of W'soran - 100pts

So ancient is the vampire that its teacher might have been the dread lord W'soran himself. Manipulating the flow of magic comes as naturally to the vampire as breathing does to a living human.

Whilst the vampire is still in play all enemy wizards suffer a -1 modifier to casting spells, this can be combined with other negative modifiers such as Balefire. The vampire also ignores miscasts and does not have to roll on the miscast table - however the spell still fails as normal. In addition the vampire adds 6" to all his spells when checking if in range.

Master of the Black Arts

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Complete Focus - 40pts

Ignoring those around him, the vampire opens his mind to the winds of Shyish, controlling them with unparalleled skill

A vampire with this power treats all spells in the Lore of Vampire as if they were Necromancy spells, and as such may be recast. It also enables the vampire to cast a Remains in Play (RiP) spell and continue casting without negating the RiP spell. The vampire may cast an additional RiP and run both together, however they may not cast any more spells until one of the RiP spells is stopped. This ability only works if the vampire is not in combat and has not moved in his previous movement phase.

Forbidden Lore

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Dark Acolyte

As per the Vampire Counts Army Book.

Experimentation - 30pts

The Necrarch has experimented on his own troops, producing potent is sometimes unexpected results.

At the start of the battle pick one core unit and roll 1D6, and then consult the following table. The results only affect troops, not any characters in the unit.

- 1 - Failure!: The unit suffers from *stupidity* for the duration of the battle.
- 2/3 - Vigour: The unit does not need a vampire within 6" to march for the duration of the battle.
- 4/5 - Disdain: The unit gains the *hatred* rule for the duration of the battle.
- 6 - Amazing Success! - The unit becomes subject to Frenzy which it can never lose, hatred for the duration of the battle, and may march move as normal per the Rule Book. The experiment is a little too perfect and the unit cannot capture table quarters as it will disintegrate as soon as the battle is over.

Warrior Familiar - 30pts

This diminutive warrior darts around his master, stopping those who would dare hurt its creator

The Necrarch does not class as being a character for issuing or accepting challenges. Any models wishing to allocate their attacks against the Necrarch in Close Combat must roll a 4+ on 1D6. If they fail the roll they may select another target as normal.

Spirit Link - 20pts

Jealously do the Necrarchs' horde their power, even from those of their own line.

A vampire with this power may use PD from any friendly vampire on the board. However for every PD used from another vampire, the "donor" vampire takes a S2 hit, no armour save of any kind allowed.

Strigoi

Bloodline Powers

Ancient Beast of Strigoi - 100pts

The eldest of the Strigoi possess not only brutal strength but also the pride and spirit of the ancient lords of their bloodline.

The vampire gains regeneration, +1 Strength and +1 attack. In addition, all friendly Ghouls and Varghulfs within 6" of the vampire suffer one less wound exactly as if the armies BSB were present. If the BSB is present the effects are cumulative.

Varghkin - 50pts

This vampire have truly embraced its bestial nature.

The vampire gains +1 Strength, Toughness and movement value, in addition the vampire will have -1 to his WS. The vampire may not pick any additional vampire powers. Vampire counts are level 2 wizards, Vampires have no magic level at all.

Massive Monstrosity - 45pts

As time pass, the Strigoi vampire grow tougher and tougher and merely shrug off wounds which would cripple or even kill lesser beings.

The vampire gains +1 Toughness

Blood Rage - 30pts

Once the vampire has tasted blood, the raging beast within is set free.
After first wound dealt in close combat the vampire is subject to frenzy and can never lose it.

Bat form - 30pts

Its wicked diet have created a bond with the flying creatures of the night.
Fly. One vampire in the army with this power may join a unit of fell bats.

Fear of the Hunter - 25pts

Just the smell of one these bestial vampires is enough to send horses or steeds into a fearful retreat.
The vampire counts as causing terror in any cavalry, monster, chariot or swarm units. Such is the fear the affected units must take the relevant Fear and Terror tests at -1Ld, and it still applies if the unit is ItP.

Infinite hatred – 15pts

Within the bitter souls of Strigoi vampires burns a great anger towards the living and the dead which never will be extinguished.
Rules per the current book.

Iron Sinews - 15pts

The strength of the Strigoi vampires is goes beyond even that of the other lords of the night.
The vampire gains + 1 Strength.

Necromancer

Familiars

Lacking the innate powers of the powerful vampires, Necromancers are forced to resort to other measures to control the dead. Many summon attendant spirits or daemons which support their foul masters as commanded

Entrancing familiar - 60pts

This familiar weaves a thread of flickering lights around the necromancer, which entrances his enemies in a web of confusion.

At the start of the enemies turn nominate one enemy unit. This unit must take a Ld test following the normal rules & modifiers. If passed this has no effect. If failed the unit must make a compulsory movement (following the normal movement rules) in a direction decided by the Necromancer player. This may include a charge into an enemy unit that is within the units LOS. This power does not affect units which are ItP.

Master Familiar- 50pts

The ghosts that walk the land speak not only of times past, but also of the world of the dead. An astute Necromancer can use this knowledge to increase his control over his minions

The Necromancer may raise Skeletons, Ghouls, Dire Wolves and Fell Bats past their starting number, and also gain +1 to casting rolls when casting IoN on them.

Warrior Familiar - 50pts

Weak and wizened Necromancers may be, but they are far from stupid. Many have created protectors, constructs bound with warrior spirits to protect them in battle

The warrior familiar has the following profile:

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
-	4	-	4	4	2	5	3	-

M - / WS 4 / BS - / S 4 / T 4 / W 2 / I 5 / A 3 / Ld -

Save - 5+ Ward

Special Rules - Killing Blow

The familiar does not have a base of its own, however as long as it is still "alive" the Necromancer cannot be hurt in combat in anyway. All close combat attacks that would normally hit the Necromancer must be resolved at the Warrior Familiar. Once the Familiar is killed attacks will then be allocated against the Necromancer as normal.

Knowledge Familiar - 45pts

Many wraiths do not have the power to remain substantial, yet they still help their living brethren by whispering them secrets of their long dead knowledge

The Necromancer may roll for an additional 4 spells from one lore from the BRB or the Lore of Vampires. In the case of the Master Necromancer it is automatically assumed they know the 4 remaining spells from the Lore of Vampires if they choose that lore.

Power Familiar - 30pts

Souls of dead necromancers crowd around their living brethren, attracting the winds of magic to them. This can be both a Boon and a curse though, as the spirits seek revenge for their demise.

The Necromancer may take a leadership test at the start of the his own magic phase, if he passes he benefits from Irresistible force on any roll of a double apart from double 1. But if he fails he suffers a miscast on any roll of a double.

Control Familiar - 25pts

The familiar constantly coughs up warpstone dust filling the air with Dark Magic. As it falls towards the ground it resonates against undead flesh like a bat's shriek bounces off a moth in the night.

The Necromancer may re-roll any failed Ld tests when rolling from the Strength of Will special rule. Subject to normal rules regarding rerolls

Spirit Familiar - 20pts

Some Necromancers spend so long communing with those who have passed over, it becomes almost second nature to summon and heal these creatures
Has +1 to cast IoN on ethereal models and heals 2 wounds instead of one.

von Carstein

Optional Army List

Characters

As per VC book except all Vampires have the following options:

May choose one following weapon:

Great Weapon:	Hero +6pts, Lord +9pts
Additional Hand Weapons	Hero +6pts, Lord +9pts
Lance (only if mounted)	Hero +6pts, Lord +9pts
2x Duelling Pistols	Hero +12pts, Lord +18pts
Rapier	Hero +8pts, Lord +12pts

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

May choose one of the following:

Heavy Armour	Hero +6pts, Lord +9pts
Full Plate	Hero +12pts, Lord +18pts

May choose one or both of the following:

Shield	Hero +3pts, Lord +5pts
Barding for Nightmare	Hero +8pts, Lord +12pts

Wight Kings has the following additional option:

Full Plate	+10pts
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Core

Skeletons

Zombies

Ghouls

Dire Wolves(*)

~ 0-1 unit may be upgraded to scouting at the cost of 2pts per model.

The scouting unit has a max unit size of 10 models

Fell Bats (*)

Bat Swarms (*)

~ If the unit is 4 bases strong or more it blocks Line of Sight

Corpse Cart

Sylvanian Levy: (*)

Crossbowmen 8pts per model

Archers 5pts per model

Free Companies 8 pts per model

0-1 Huntsmen 10 pts per model

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

*for each unit of Skeletons, Zombies, or Ghouls, you are allowed to select ONE core unit from of Dire Wolves, Fell Bats, Bat Swarms or Sylvanian Levy which will count towards your minimum core.

Special

Grave Guard

~ The option to upgrade to Great Weapons is removed.

~ They may instead take Halberds in addition to their shields for +2pts per model.

~ 0-1 unit may be upgraded to Drakenhof Guard (see **New Options /**

Rules section for details) for +5pts per model.

Spirit Hosts

Black Coaches

~ max 1 per 1000pts

Wraiths

Rare

0-1 Blood Knights

0-1 Varghulfs

Black Knights

New Options / Rules

Sylvanian Levy

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
Trooper	4	3	3	3	3	1	2	1	6
Sergeant	4	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	6
Marksman	4	3	4	3	3	1	2	1	6

Crossbowmen:

Equipment: Crossbow & Hands Weapons

Upgrade one model to:

Marksman (+5pts), Standard Bearer (+10pts), Musician (+5pts)

Free Companies:

Equipment: 2x Hand Weapons

Upgrade one model to:

Sergeant (+10pts), Standard Bearer (+10pts), Musician (+5pts)

Archers:

Equipment: Bow & Hand Weapon

Upgrade one model to:

Marksman (+5pts), Stand Bearer (+10pts), Musician (+5pts)

Special Rules: Skirmishers

Huntsmen:

Equipment: Bow & Hand Weapon

Upgrade one model to:

Marksman (+5pts)

Special Rules: Skirmishers, Scouts

Drakenhof Guard

Drakenhof Guard follow have the same stats and rules as Grave Guard with the following exceptions:

- +1 Weapon Skill
- Equipped with Great Weapons
- Equipped with Full Plate amour.
- May take a magical banner upto the value of 125pts

Rapier

Prideful and arrogant, many von Carsteins carry to battle their favoured blade, determined to prove all others are lesser than they

Hand Weapon. In challenges only, the vampire has +1 to hit.

Blood Dragon

Optional Army List

Characters

The Character choices are as per the Vampire Counts Army Book, with the exception that the Necromancer may not take a Corpse Cart as a mount.

Core

Skeletons

Grave Guard

~Limitation: One Grave Guard unit may be taken as a core unit choice for every Skeleton unit, however it does not fill up a required core slot.

Dire Wolves

~Do not fill required minimum core slot.

Special

Grave Guard

Black Knights

Blood Knights

~Limitation: Max 1 unit per 1000pts, excluding Generals retinue if applicable.

Bat Swarms

Fell Bats

0-1 Spirit Hosts

Rare

Wraiths

New Options / Rules

The Blood Dragon General may take a retinue of Blood Knights or Black Knights. The unit costs exactly the same as per the VC book, but does not take up a special slot, and in the case of Blood Knights, do not count towards the 1 per 1000pts limitation.

If this option is taken, the General and unit cannot willingly separate in battle, and if forced to do so must rejoin one another as soon as possible.

Any Blood Dragon Vampire may take a unit of Black Knights as his retinue. They follow the same rules / costs as normal however they are taken as a core choice (that do not count towards minimum core restrictions). If this option is chosen the vampire cannot willingly separate from them in battle, and if forced to do so they must rejoin one another as soon as possible.

Lahmian

Optional Army List

Characters

Any vampire characters may take the following options (cost per model):

Additional Hand Weapon: Hero +5pts, Lord +7pts
Poisoned Attacks: Hero +10pts, Lord +15pts
Great Bow: Hero +12pts, Lord +18pts

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

New Hero Option:

0-1 Swain

The player may choose one hero choice from any army list with the following exceptions:

Daemons of Chaos, Tomb Kings, Lizardmen, Vampire Counts and Orcs & Goblins,

The points cost is stated in their army book. They may choose any mundane or magic equipment as per their army list entry. The swain may not benefit from any VC items or spells from the Lore of Vampires. They benefit from the VC general's leadership and Battle Standard Bearer as they would do in their normal army list.

They Swain may not join any Undead units.

Core

1+ Skeletons

~May take the following options (costs are per model):

Halberds +1pts
Spears +1pts
Heavy Armour +2pts.

*If this option is taken the unit cannot be increased over its starting size by Invocation of Nehek.

0-1 Swain Entourage

~One core unit may be chosen from the same army list as the Swain. It may not choose any magic items, marks, abilities from their army list, nor may it benefit from VC banners or spells from the Lore of Vampires. It may choose mundane weapon and command options as per its description. They benefit from the VC general's leadership and Battle Standard Bearer as they would do in their normal army list. The maximum size of this Unit Strength 10.

0-2 Dire Wolves

~Do not count as minimum core requirement.

0-1 Bat Swarms

~Do not count as minimum core requirement.

Special

Grave Guard

~May take the following additional options (cost per model):

Full plate	+3pts
Halberds	+2pts
Great Weapons	+2pts

Black Knights.

~May take the following options (cost per model):

Full Plate	+4pts
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Zombies

Spirit Hosts

0-1 Fell Bats

Rare

0-1 Blood Knights

~May take the following options (cost per model):

Full Plate	+6pts
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Black Coach

Wraiths

New Options / Rules

Great Bow

Harking back to the days of ancient Lahmia, the daughters of Neferata are required to learn the ways of the Asp goddess, to venerate all that they lost when their city fell. As normal bows are too weak for the prodigious power of the ladies of the night, each sire gifts their get a bow of superior balance and strength, a deadly weapon in the hands of those with the skill to use them.

Follows the normal rules for bows with the following profile:

Range: 36"

S: As per the base strength of the vampire.

The strength of the bow can change if the vampire is affected by anything during the battle which lowers or heightens this stat permanently.

The vampire may still shoot her bow even if she has marched.

It also has the *Killing Blow* special rule at short range.

Necrarch

Optional Army List

Characters

All vampire characters can ride an Abyssal Terror, paying the same points as a lord would. The vampire general may upgrade his Abyssal Terror paying the appropriate points costs.

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

Core

Skeletons

1+ Zombies

Corpse Carts

~do not count towards minimum core requirement

0-1 Experiments

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

Special

Ghouls

Dire Wolves

Fell Bats

Grave Guard

Wraiths

Spirit Hosts

Rare

0-1 Varghulf (Experimentation)

Black Knights

Unridden Zombie Dragon or Abyssal Terror

~ Do not count as hero choices, no need for monster reaction tests. Cost same as Lord mount. Abyssal Terror may purchase upgrades in the general is not riding an Abyssal Terror.

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

New Options / Rules

Experiments - 35pts

Unit Size: 5+

At the start of the game, after deployment roll using the below table for the units stats. The roll is for the whole unit excluding characters:

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
Experiment	D3+3	D3+1	0	D3+3	D3+2	D3	D6-1*	D3	D3+4

*If 1 or less is the result of the Initiative test, the unit suffers *Stupidity*

Once the stats have been rolled, roll another D6 for the unit's special rule:

1 - Pickled Skin - has the flammable special rule

2 - Explosive - When an Experiment is killed, every model in base contact takes an immediate Strength 2 hit.

3 - Tough Hide - has 4+ armour save

4 - Relentless Blows - Has ASF

5 - Unstoppable - Has regeneration

6 - Assimilation - For every enemy model that was killed by an Experiment with a 6 on the To Wound roll, another Experiment may be added to the unit. This model may not fight in the Close Combat it was raised in and has the same stat line and Special Rule.

The Experiment unit also has the **Undead** special rule.

Abyssal Terror Upgrades

The line of W'soran like to experiment with all their undead creations. Their favoured creatures however, are always the monsters they create by melding parts of other creatures together. Be it Wyvern, Dragon, Manticore or other hellish creature, the sum of the parts can prove to be much deadlier.

You may choose to increase the statistics of **one** Abyssal Terror in your army. If this is a mount, it must be the mount of the general.

+1 Strength: 25pts per increase. Can only be taken twice.

+1 Weapon Skill: 5pts per increase up to max WS6. Each increase over the first doubles the points costs, so +2WS will be 10pts, +3WS, 20pts and so forth

+1 Toughness: 35pts per increase can only be taken once

+1 Attack: 15pts per increase, Can be taken a maximum of three times.

+1 Wound: 50pts, max total 7 wounds.

+1 Initiative: 5pts. Each increase over the first doubles the points costs, so +2I will be 10pts, +3I, 20pts and so forth

Special Rule Options

Scaly Skin / Tough Hide: +1 to the creatures armour save up to a maximum of 2+ armour save. 5pts per increase, each increase over the first doubles the points costs, so +2 to save will be 10pts, +3 to save will be 20pts and so forth.

Devastating Charge - Causes D6+1 impact hits in the charge: 35pts basic, add an additional 10pts for each strength upgrade.

Guardian - All ranged shots must be allocated against the AT. Any attacks in close combat must be randomised as per shooting, the rider cannot be specifically targeted. 50pts

Strigoi

Optional Army List

Characters

0-1 Character other than vampire per 2000pts

No BSB

No mundane or magical weapons options

Core:

Ghouls

Skirmisher Ghouls +1pts/model

~ There cannot be more units of Skirmisher Ghouls than standard Ghoul units.

~ Can still be raised past their starting unit size through use of the 'Summon Ghouls' Bloodline Power

0-1 Court of the Ghoul King - 15pts per model

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

Bat Swarms

~ do not count towards Core requirement

Fell Bats

~ do not count towards Core requirement

Wolves

~ do not count towards Core requirement

Special

Varghulfs

Skeletons

Zombies

0-1 Strigany - 6pts per model

~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

Rare

Wraiths

Spirit Hosts

Grave Guard

Court of the Ghoul King

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
Court Ghoul	4	4	0	4	4	1	3	3	7
Court Ghast	4	4	0	4	4	1	4	4	8

Equipment: Dirty Claws & Teeth

Upgrade one model to Court Ghast +20pts

Special Rules:

Poisoned Attacks

~ **Cannot** be raised past their starting unit size through use of the 'Summon Ghouls' Bloodline Power

Strigany

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
Strigany	4	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7
Court Ghast	4	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	7

Equipment: 2x Hand Weapons

Upgrade Options:

Upgrade to Light Armour +1pt per model

Upgrade to Bow (in addition to current weapons) +2pt per model

Domnu +10pts, Standard Bearer +10pts, Muscian + 10pts

Followers of the Damned

The Strigany have never forgotten their Lords in Death and follow them fanatically, however to this is seen as a betrayal to their fellow men who hunt them down mercilessly

The Strigany have the *Stubborn* special rule. In addition any Empire, Bretonnian or Kislev models *Hate* any Strigany units.

Necromancers

Optional Army List

Characters

Master Necromancer

- ~see stat changes for options and standard mounts
- ~May choose the Master's Corpse Cart as a mount choice
- ~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

Necromancer

- ~see stat changes for options and mounts

Wight King

67pts

- ~Battle Standard Bearer option

20pts

- ~Limit of 1 per 1000pts

Core

Zombies

3pts per model

Skeletons

7pts per model

Crypt Ghoul

7pts per model

- ~Upgrades cost the same as the Vampire Counts Book

Corpse Cart

67pts per model

- ~Balefire and Lodestone Upgrades

20pts each

Special

Grave Guard

10pts per model

- ~0-1 per Wight King

Spirit Hosts

55pts per base

Dire Wolves

7pts per model

- ~Upgrades cost the same as the Vampire Counts Book

Rare

Black Knights

21pts per model

- ~Upgrades cost the same as the Vampire Counts Book

Cairn Wraiths

45pts per model

- ~Upgrades cost the same as the Vampire Counts Book

0-1 Zombie Giant

200pts per model

- ~see **New Options / Rules** section for details.

New Options / Rules

Master's Corpse Cart - 175pts

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
4	3	0	4	5	3	1	2D6+2	7

Equipment: Grasping Hands

Armour Save: 4+

Special Rules

Undead

Regeneration

Miasma of Deathly Vigour

The Power of the Master

The most powerful of Necromancers can create contraptions of immense power that eclipse those of their brethren. Fuelled with the power of the dead, it invigorates those nearby whilst providing more than ample protection to its owner.

The Master's Corpse Cart automatically comes with both the Balefire and Unholy Lodestone upgrades. In addition it confers its *Regeneration* special rule on its rider.

Zombie Giant

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
6	2	0	5	5	6	1	5	2

Equipment: Monstrous Hands and Feet

Special Rules

Undead

Terror

Large Target

Move (as per normal Giant rules)

Fall Over (as per normal Giant rules, with the exception that that the Zombie Giant falls over on a roll of 1-2)

Resilient

The pure size of the zombie giant means the power to resurrect such a creature must be all the more stronger. In battle this makes it all the more resilient, fighting on against insurmountable odds to carry out its master's bidding.

If the ZG loses combat it will only ever suffer a single crumble wound, regardless of the actual CR

Zombie Giant Special Attacks

A Zombie Giant may choose to forgo it's normal attacks in any combat phase and instead choose one of the following attacks:

Vomit - One Use Per Game

The ZG vomits a disgusting combination of long rotten flesh, stagnant bile and other unwholesome products on its foe. The ZG nor its foe may attack for that turn unless they have already done so. The ZG gains +3CR for this turn when working out combat results. In addition, for the remainder of the combat all enemy units hit by this attack suffer a -1 to hit and wound as they slip and struggle in the mess.

Braaaaiinnnnssss.....

Can only be used against Ogre-sized creatures or larger. The ZG grasps hold of his opponents head, trying to eat the grey goodness inside. Your opponent must take an Initiative test on 1D6, a 6 is always a failure. If failed the model suffers D6 S5 hits. Any wounds inflicted heal an equal amount of number on the ZG, but they cannot take him over his original number of wounds.

Splat!

Can only be used against models Unit strength 2 or below. The Zombie Giant picks out one juicy morsel and attempts to turn him to mush with his fist. Pick one model in Base to Base contact. The Zombie Giant may make one attack, rolling to hit using his normal weapon skill. If successful the model suffers an automatic wound. If a 5+ is rolled to hit, the blow counts as having the KB special rule.



Masters of the Night

Written by Get_of_W'soran

To many, the history and beginnings of the vampires has long been hidden.....

The first of the vampires can be traced back to the city of Lahmia, Nehekhara, now known as the Land of the Dead, however the origins of vampirism itself go back much further.

It started in -1968 when Nagash (who was later to become the Great Necromancer), learned Dark Magic from a group of Dark Elves who had been captured in Zandri. Though not willing, the Dark Elves had little choice to teach him once he had imprisoned them in the Great Pyramid of Khemri. He proved to be an extremely gifted pupil and after learning all he believes he can from his captives, he kills his tutors in a sorcerous duel.

Nagash always had a lifelong fear of death, something which combined with this indomitable will drove him to extreme lengths to beat his inevitable end. Combining what he had learnt along with using the ancient secrets of the Mortuary Cult, he created what would become the basis of Necromancy and his quest for immortality he creates the Elixir of Life. He drinks it himself, as well as giving it to his vassals, the first of which is Arkhan the Black, his Chief Lieutenant. The Elixir exceeds expectations, not only granting immortality, but increased strength and magical aptitude.

Over the years Nagash attempts to impose his will on the cities of Nehekhara, eventually culminating in a war. Though this is a tale in itself, that is for another time. What is of interest to those who seek knowledge of vampires is what happened after Nagash's defeat.

After the Great Necromancer's defeat at the hands of a coalition of Nehekharan Cities, Neferatem (better known as Neferata) became the Queen of the city of Lahmia. However unknown to her, one of her Chief Advisors W'soran, Prince of Rasetra and High Priest of Lahmia, was a covert supporter of Nagash. Through manipulation W'soran made Neferata jealous of the Mortuary Cult (whom only men could be members of the priesthood), and secretly he taught her the magics of the Mortuary Cult. Using his influence and good standing with the Queen, he ensured that the Queen saved one of the Nagash's great Books.

The Book was awash in Dark Magic and slowly corrupted the once pure Queen, unlocking a thirst for immortality and eternal youth leading to Neferatem and W'soran working together to try and unlock the secrets of Nagash's Elixir of Life from his rescued texts.

After a time they were successful in a fashion, the elixir they created was different than that which Nagash himself had once concocted. Some texts suggest that it was because with of a pact with daemons, some that it was a trap set in the book so only Nagash could create the original elixir. Whatever the cause, in certain ways it surpassed the original elixir in that it did not need to be continually drank to keep the drinker's immortality, as well as granting superhuman strength, speed and regenerative abilities. However in many ways it was also inferior as well, having effects that Neferata had not foreseen. The drinkers became pale, extremely sensitive to sunlight, were hurt deeply by silver and holy objects, and forever thirsted for the blood of men.

Neferata and W'soran were both the first of the Lahmians to drink the new elixir, and become the first of the Master Vampires however in time they realised that being the only mortals in a city of immortals was too dangerous and so they conspired to bring others into the ranks of immortals.

Seven Lords of Lahmia were gifted the right to drink the elixir but only two of the lord's names are remembered, as the others and their lines were annihilated in the sacking of Lahmia. They are Harakhte the Court Vizier, and Maatmeses, the Chief Judge and Lord of the city Watch.

The next mortal to become a Master Vampire however was unplanned by Neferata and that was Ushoran her younger brother. He was a large man who whilst physically strong, was mentally weak due to a lifetime of being bullied and pushed around by his elder sister. Ushoran was known as the Lord of Masks due to the fact he often threw parties, using them to show feats of his enormous strength to amuse the attending nobles, but for the most part they laughed at him rather than with him. Ushoran had learnt of the Elixir after overhearing Neferata and W'soran, and sneaked into its keeping place and supped from the chalice, thus becoming the ninth Master Vampire. At first Neferata raged at such insolence but he was allowed to live for a new law was created saying no vampire may kill another.

The next candidate was the head of Neferata's royal guard, the greatest warrior in the land, a man called Abhorash. Abhorash however was honourable and pure so it was unknown if he would knowingly drink the elixir. However he was also in love with Queen Neferata (though the love was never returned), and one night she invited him into her chambers and bid him drink from a chalice. Unbeknownst to him it contained the elixir and as soon as it touched his lips his fate was sealed. Once he drank he became the next of the Master Vampires, however he raged at his new condition and locked himself up unwilling to consume human blood. Eventually even his great honour and strength of will could not resist such a curse and, finally he feasted on the life force of mortals, killing many in the ensuing bloodbath.

The last mortal to drink from the elixir was sometime later, a man called Vashanesh. He was the son of Lahkashaz although born out of wedlock, a powerful and tall man with an air of nobility and a fascination for strategy. Although it was also said he was a hard man, a trait perhaps inherited from his great grandfather's second wife, a woman of Nagash's own bloodline. Vashanesh had escaped Khemri and travelled to Lahmia believing all unholy truths about the city were mere rumours, however soon after entering he was arrested by pale guards. Vashanesh however merely demanded they bring him before the court as he had blood-ties to the ruling nobility. Once brought to the court he was mocked by Ushoran and had a sword raised up to him by Abhorash, but he merely ignored them and spoke to the Queen who was also fascinated with him. Neferata bid everyone leave her although at first W'soran tried to stay, as he normally would have been permitted. However she bid him leave also, and for the first time in a century W'soran's hold over her was weakened. They both spoke for a time and finally for reasons unknown Neferata offered him the place of King. Once he agreed she immediately brought him to the temple of blood, where Vashanesh drank from the Chalice upon the altar and so becoming the last of the Master Vampires. The Master Vampires went on to earn the name Trueborn Vampires for being the only ones of their kind to not be born into darkness through the blood kiss.

Eventually the true nature of the Lahmia was discovered as the arrogance of the vampires led them to feed in other cities. After a lengthy war Lahmia was sacked, destroying many of the Masters, however some did survive and journey north to Nagashizzar, and the by now supremely powerful Lord of Undeath.

In the following war that waged the now humbled Lords of Lahmia fought as Nagash's lieutenants, leading his armies into battle. They were controlled by a ring which was gifted to Vashanesh. This ring not only granted the bearer regenerative powers beyond comprehension, but also allowed Nagash to control the minds and will of the vampires.

Finally Vashanesh realised they were but pawns in Nagash's plan, and so during battle against the armies of Nehekharu he allowed himself to be killed. Free from their bonds the Masters fled from the land, hiding themselves away, fearing the wrath of Nagash.

In the current age some knowledge is known on each of the master's, though it is little to say the least.

Abhorash never travelled with the others to Nagash. After the destruction of his beloved city he turned on the others for their arrogance. He and his few remaining gets travelled north as well, in the process drawing up the rules of conduct and honour, twisted as they are, that his sons were to follow. His most important ruling was that his line was to find a way to overcome their bloodthirst, so that events of the past would not happen again. Abhorash was eventually successful, after defeating a mighty red dragon in one on one combat, he drained the beast, finally sating his thirst forever. Afterwards he bade his sons train in combat until they could too defeat a dragon in single combat, and follow in his footsteps, and so his line took the name of Blood Dragons. Abhorash is said to be waiting for his sons in a place unknown, although many also suggest that he travels the lands in disguise, watching their progress and challenging those he deems worthy.

Ushoran travelled north, and finally succeeded where Lahmia failed. He created the Nation and City of Strigos, a utopian land where mortals and vampires lived in harmony, only the criminal providing sustenance for the lords of the night. Ushoran sent ambassadors to the other Masters, inviting them to the city, but in their jealousy they spurned his kindness. Eventually the city fell to a great Orc Waaagh, a powerful Shaman managing to cast a spell that destroyed Ushoran and signed the fate for the rest of his bloodline. For when they fled and tried to turn to the other bloodlines, they were rejected and hunted. Eventually the line now known as Strigoi grew full of hate, and so twisted their bodies into the monsters of legend, forced to hide in crypts and cemeteries.

W'soran stayed loyal to Nagash when the others fled. First and foremost his loyalty had been to the ancient Liche, and so he was spared Nagash's great anger at the treachery of the other bloodlines. W'soran's knowledge and power eventually grew until only Nagash himself was more skilled and potent in the arts of Necromancy. However the nature of vampires were to be his undoing, as the selfishness that runs through all of them finally was revealed when his own get Melkhoir surprised and killed the ancient vampire, before fleeing with one of the Books of Nagash.

After she was overlooked by Nagash in favour of Vashanesh, Neferata developed an intense hatred for men. She became bitter and twisted, and whilst perhaps the most beautiful creature in existence on the outside, became dark and ugly on the inside. After being freed she travelled north, eventually coming upon the Dwarven hold of the Silver Pinnacle. Though the stubborn warriors tried to resist, they had never fought the undead before, and were eventually overwhelmed. Neferata lives still in the Silver Pinnacle to this day directing her bloodline known as the Sisterhood of Lahmia throughout the world.

Some records state Vashanesh died forever that day on the battlefield, but most think this unlikely knowing his high intelligence and foresight. It is believed the ring he received from Nagash resurrected him, and thus he set off to travel the world. Sketchy records suggest he travelled as far north as Kislev before disappearing for many years. The next mention of the King of Lahmia was when a powerful vampire known as Vlad von Carstein appeared in Sylvania. Bearing a remarkable resemblance to the descriptions of Vashanesh, and bearing a ring that was discovered many years later to powerful regenerative abilities, many believe they were one and the same. If this is the case, then Vashanesh was finally killed assaulting Altdorf, after his ring was stolen by the master thief Felix Mann. His body was borne over the battlements by the Grand Theogonist of the time, and his remains forever sealed under the holy martyrs body.

There were two other Trueborns who survived the fall of Lahmia and the subsequent enslavement by Nagash. Little is known of them, as they travelled to other parts of the world and have ensured they stayed more secluded than the other better known bloodlines.

Of Maatmeses it is said that after abandoning Nagash that she went south and east, to the steaming jungles of the Southlands. She and her kind possibly became degenerated into tribal savages as she fled to swamps to hide (the Master Vampires were terrified of Nagash's retribution), where they fed mostly on serpents, crocodiles and the odd tribesman or slaver from Araby. Her kind is said to work magic as something akin to the legends of Voodoo. *(Our regular readers will have noted that our continuing story “The Children of Maat” is based on the life of this particular master, another superb instalment is towards the end of this issue - DoN)*

Lastly, the least is known about Harakhte. He is believed to have been very orderly and concerned with protocol as befits a Vizier, and so believing the old world to be too savage he headed east into the lands that are known as Cathay. Rumours believe his line lives on there and are obsessed with order as much as he.



The Golden Bat Painting Competition Winter 2009

Sponsored by OG Games

Well here we are again! The Golden Bat Painting Competition seems to have come round so fast that I can still clearly remember the fun of the last one! Starting just after Christmas, so a perfect time to get to grips with those new models you just got, this rumours abound suggest this one is going to be the biggest yet, and why not you may ask? Not only do we have actual prizes from our excellent sponsors OG Games, but finally we have the medals for the winners' profiles.

How to Enter

Entry for the competition opens on the 01 January 2009.

A stickied thread will be created in the **"Dying to Help"** section of Carpe Noctem, entitled:

"The Golden Bat Painting Competition Winter 09 – Entry Thread".

Entrant should post clear pictures of their model(s) in this thread, making sure the pictures are not distorted by flash / movement etc. Until the closing date, any of the specified entries will be accepted, and entries that do not fit the criteria will be disqualified.

Work-in-progress (WIP) shots are allowed and encouraged, however it should be made clear in the post the pictures are WIP.

Your final entry photos should state clearly in a title above the photos:

" Final Entry".

Each final entry is allowed up to three photos from various angles.

Criteria

- One entry per person.
- Model(s) must be related to Vampire Counts in some way but does not have to come from the Games Workshop range. So models from Reaper. Rackham etc are acceptable
- Models must be fully painted.
- Models must be fully based.
- Models must be painted by the entrant (no claiming credit for other peoples work!)
- Models have to have been painted within the last six months, no entering models painted years ago.
- You cannot enter models entered in any of the previous Golden Bat Competitions.

Acceptable Entries

You may choose **one** of the following as your entry:

- One character, with or without mount.
- Up to three models from the same units that are either infantry, cavalry, flyers, or swarms. Models can be normal troopers, command group, or a mixture of both.
- One monstrous creature, Varghulf, Corpse Cart or Black Coach.
- You may convert and enter one of the new units from the Bloodline Armies Optional Army Lists following the above guidelines.

Closing Date

Entry Closes on 31 January 2009 at 2000 GMT. All photos marked "Final Entry" will then be put forward to voting.

Voting Opens

The voting poll opens on 31 January 2009 2200 GMT. A poll will be created with all the entrants displayed in the thread. Members will be able to vote for one entry only.

Entrants may vote, but they may not vote for their own entry! (This will be checked on)

Voting Closes and Winners Announced

The voting poll closes – 14 February 2009 2000GMT. The poll will be closed and the winner and second place announced!

The Prizes

First Place:

- £15.00 voucher to spend at OG Games.
- The winning model will be displayed in the Home Page of Carpe Noctem, and have its own page in the next issue of the Invocation.
- The coveted Golden Bat medal for their profile.
- 100 Zombies Points.

Second Place:

- £7.50 voucher to spend at OG Games.
- The Silver Bat medal for their profile.
- 50 Zombies Points.

All Entrants

- Everybody who enters will receive 10 Zombie Points.

Finally, here are a reminder of our previous winners:



Illusionarypresence – Wight Battle Standard Bearer



The Dark Sheep - *Fester d'Archelioux*

Blasphemous Deeds: A Blending Tutorial

Written by Redarmy27

Hi everyone! As we all know, our vampires are the centrepieces of our armies. Aside from ripping our opponents to shreds, our pale brethren are feared because of their mystical looks and abilities. Today I plan on highlighting Vlad's spell casting ability by demonstrating some blending on the spell he's casting from his aura.



To begin, let's establish what we'll be needing for this task. First we'll need a clean area with everything in reach. I know mine may seem a bit cluttered, but it works for me and the lighting in my area is perfect. Without decent lighting, blending becomes very difficult.



Secondly, we'll need the tools of the trade. Brushes are an obvious choice and for a job like this I like to use the "1" size brush for establishing base coats and the "3/0", the smaller of the two, for blending the highlights and the shades. Aside from brushes I enjoy using a wet palette. Now for successful blends you don't need a wet one, but coming from personal experience I can honestly say that having one has helped tremendously with getting paint to the right consistency and allowing me to work with my colours without them drying out. Lastly, I like to use a medium such as Reaper's flow improver. Normally I use water to create thin layers and glazes, but sometimes I want incredibly thin glazes and this stuff does the trick. It helps create a very fine glaze without separating the pigments in the paint. It works brilliantly.



Before we can get any further, I'll share a good trick that I learned from fellow painters in the trade when it comes to blending. Many painters, including myself from time to time, struggle when trying to achieve the right amount of paint on their brush. The trick that I've been taught is to use a paper towel to wick the excess off before I apply the brush to the model. You barely want any paint to be on the brush, it sounds a bit weird but trust me. In doing so, you create very thin layers. Yes, it does take a bit to get the layers to build up, but the finer the layers, the better the job will look. Also by incorporating this trick you gain better brush control, allowing you to put the paint exactly where you want it on the model. It sounds a bit silly, but try it. The many layers and results are worth it.



Finally we need colours. I know that there is a plethora of paint ranges out there, but I personally use P3. They're great paints and I enjoy the colour range. For this session I wanted to go a dark purple with some brighter highlights so I used the following paints in this order: Beaten Purple; Cygnar Blue Base; Coal Black (a very dark blue/green); Murderous Magenta; Ember Orange.

Let's get to painting.

Step 1: Prime your model.



As you can see I used a grey primer. According to some, blending only works with white primers, but that's not entirely true. I've blended in grey, white and black and they all worked out fine. The darker primer will require a bit more work as to get the colors to pop, but there isn't any reason why a black primer won't work. Personally I use a grey primer as it's a happy medium between white and black.

Step 2: Base coating.



For this portion I used the "1" brush and took Beaten Purple and brought the paint down to the consistency of skim milk. I wiped my brush and began applying my layers. Overall, the basecoat could be argued as the most important. You'll want to get this coat solid, but not necessarily thick. Use thin layers. Overall, I used about 6 layers of the color to achieve a nice uniform coat over the spell being cast.

Step 3: Shading 1.



Now that we have a basecoat established, I took some of my Beaten Purple and mixed it with some Cygnar Blue Base. For the shading coat, you want to be using a glaze. For this portion and here on out, I switched to using the 3/0 brush, or the “detailing brush”. It will take a bit to get the colours to show, but hang with me. You’ll be seeing results in no time. Draw the brush with your shading mixture from the high points to the recesses so that the majority of the shading ends up in the recesses. You want to keep your basecoat visible, so don’t cover it up too much. I did this with 2-3 thin coats, waited and then 3 more very thin ones. It helps to blow on the paint a bit to dry. If it dries nearly instantly, enough that you can actually see it do so, then you have the consistency in the “sweet spot”.

Step 4: Shading 2



With the first part of shading down, it’s time to immerse ourselves further into darkness. I mixed my Beaten Purple and Cygnar Blue base with some Coal Black to give me a deep blue-purple glaze. I worked closer to the recesses on this one and worked on giving the faces in the spell a bit more contrast. Again, follow the same steps with your paper towel and helping the paint dry by blowing on it. Don’t let the paint pool up or you could end up with “pooling residue”.

Step 5: Binding Wash and First Highlight.



After I was happy with my shading, I took my base color and created a very, very fine glaze with the help of the flow improver. I did this to unify all the colors a bit, making them all blend and mesh together. Once this was dry, I mixed some Beaten Purple with Murderous Magenta and slowly started to build up my high lights. Remember to keep the paint thin and use your paper towel to wick the excess paint away. This time draw your brush from the recesses to the high points. This will help transport the colors to the highlighted portions. Overall, I did roughly 6 very fine glazes with this mixture before being happy with it. Patience! Stay with me, we're almost there!

Step 6: Final Highlight



We've made it my friends, we're at the final stage. For this final highlight, I mixed in gradual amounts of Ember Orange until eventually I was using just straight Ember Orange. Keep the glaze very thin here and be patient when drawing your brush up. You've made it. Once you're satisfied with your results, pat yourself on the back, you've just successfully blended!

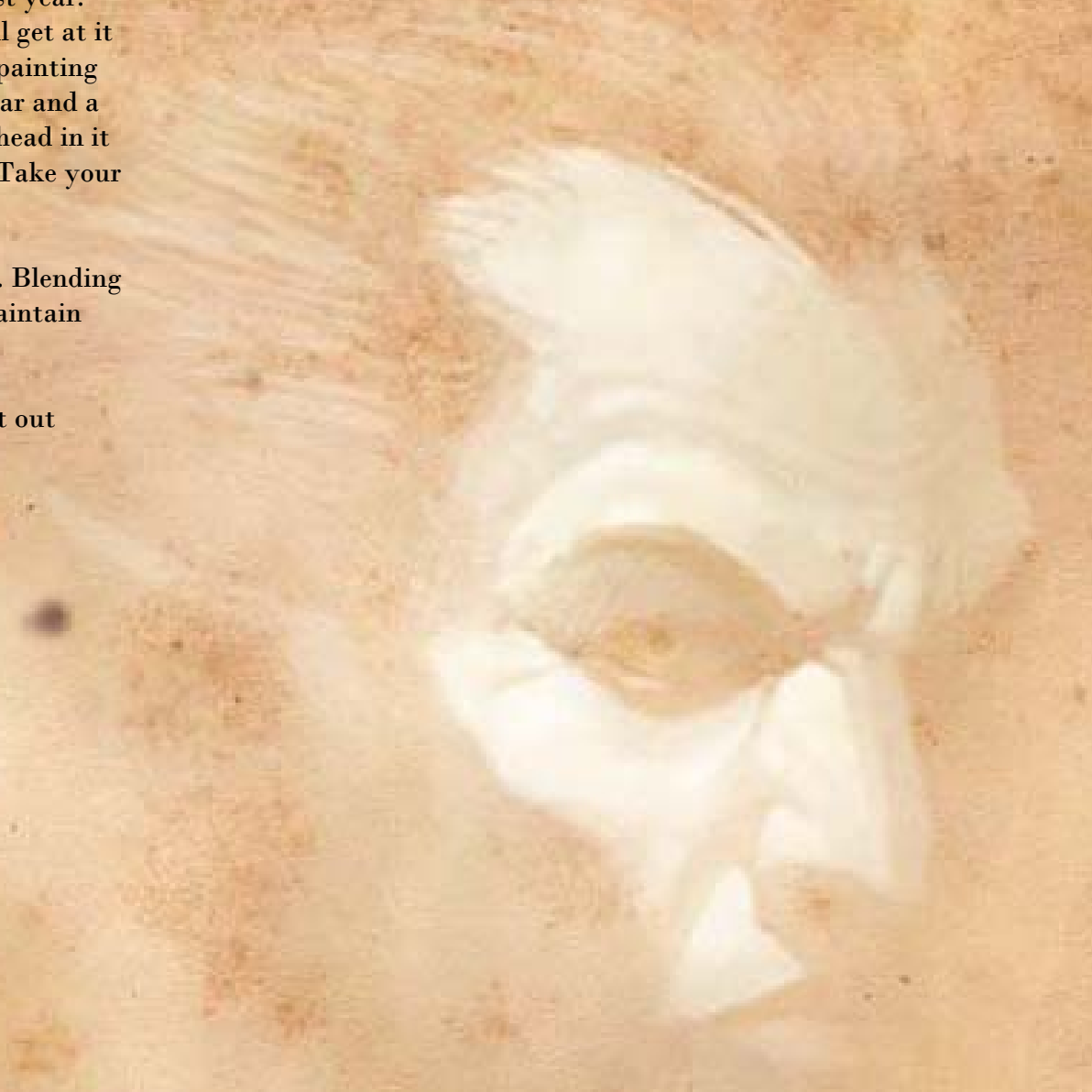
Final thoughts...

I am by no means a professional at this, in fact in the 6 years I have been painting, I've only really gotten the hang of this process this last year. Don't be afraid to practice, the more you do so, the better you'll get at it and the more comfortable you'll be at trying new things in the painting realm. I never really attempted blending much until about a year and a half ago and I'm sorry that I hadn't tried it sooner. Keep your head in it and practice. Never throw out your work if you get frustrated. Take your time and don't force it; it will come to you.

Aside from patience and practice, keep your brushes very clean. Blending demands a lot of precision from your brushes; the better you maintain them, the better you'll find yourself blending.

Well, I hope this tutorial has helped. Have a great one! Now get out there and start blending!

Redarmy27





The Cannibal Hordes of the Strigoi

Written by Swissdictator

Themed Army Lists

Strigoi vampires are outcasts even amongst the undead, forsaken to the point to the point of driving home a feeling of bitterness and hatred. This guide, much like the previous, is designed so it doesn't need permission to be used as it stays entirely within the confines of the army book. This is an aide to designing fluffier lists that will leave you feeling like you are playing a specific bloodline.

Sadly, as we can't have different stats for vampires from different bloodlines we have to work in order to compensate for this. Thus some restrictions previously applied may be altered.

Strigoi vampires are not known for being subtle, or even being inconspicuous. When they're not active, they simply go into hiding as opposed to trying to hide amongst the cattle. Their armies should reflect this. Therefore they will be less magic orientated, and more directed towards combat. Their armies should have a wild and feral feel to them, which this guide intends to help create.

First, we shall look at bloodline powers.

The **Severed** is perhaps the best name for the Strigoi, but no Strigoi vampire should take Spectral Form. The other two powers certainly fit a Strigoi vampire.

The **Arkayne** is generally not fitting for the Strigoi. However, some of the more ancient Strigoi vampires might have gained skill in the dark arts over time, therefore a Vampire Lord may take Dark Acolyte.

The **Bestialle** is a great way to describe the Strigoi bloodline. Any of these powers may be taken by any Vampire.

Of the **Martialle** powers, only Red Fury may be taken by a Strigoi Vampire as their feral nature can leave them in a blood lust.

No Strigoi vampire may take a power from the **Courtly**, as the Strigoi do not waste their time with manipulation of cattle for they hate all creatures not serving their ends.

The only power of the **Master** available to the Strigoi is Summon Ghouls, for the Strigoi are known for their bond with the wretched creatures.

In the sixth edition army book, Strigoi were not allowed to take magic items of any kind. However, they were also granted some base benefits to their profile and had bloodline powers available that no longer exist. So in an effort to keep the feel of their being beastly and not carrying items, but to compensate for not having the same benefits they had in the previous book, they will have very limited access to items.

These restrictions apply only to vampires in the Strigoi army. No magic weapons are available. All magic armour is available except for Enchanted Shield, Nightshroud, Armour of Night, and The Cadaverous Cuirass. The only Enchanted Item available is the Talisman of the Lycni. All Talismans are available, except for The Carstein Ring. The only Arcane items available are dispell scrolls and power stones. The only magic banner is the Royal Standard of Strigos.

The Strigoi will not turn away Necromancers and therefore may take them, however they don't bother raising wights to serve them and may not take a Wight King. All Strigoi must be on foot, for they are more likely to feed on lesser mounts and do not seek to dominate the beastlier creatures for they strive to fly on their own should they wish to be mobile.

Amongst the common ranks that make up the core of their armies, only ghouls count for minimum core requirements. Skeletons and corpse carts are unavailable to them. In keeping with their beastly nature they may only field Fell Bats from the special units section, and Vhargulfs from the rare units.

In terms of making your army look more like a Strigoi vampire, you should seek the old Strigoi vampire figures. If these prove unavailable you should model an overly muscular vampire with exaggerated features that look almost animal. Tattered cloth should be the primary 'apparel' donned by the Strigoi. The army is fairly simple to construct.

Sample Army List

Vampire Lord

Supernatural Horror, Infinite Hatred, Dark Acolyte, Summon Ghouls
Flayed Hauberk, Crown of the Damned, Dispell Scroll
Level upgrade

Vampire (BSB)

Ghoul Kin, Infinite Hatred
Walach's Bloody Hauberk

Vampire

Summon Ghouls, Infinite Hatred
Accursed Armor, Dispell Scroll

Vampire

Talisman of the Lynxi (Enchanted Item), Talisman of Protection
Hunter in the Dark, Supernatural Horror

23 Ghouls

Ghast upgrade

23 Ghouls

Ghast upgrade

23 Ghouls

Ghast upgrade

24 Ghouls

Ghast upgrade

5 Dire Wolves

5 Dire Wolves

3 Fellbats

3 Fellbats

Vhargulf

Vhargulf

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Building a Blood Dragon

Written by Johnny B

If many of you are tired of paying the horrific prices for Games Workshops Blood Knights, then Johnny B is here to help you with a cheaper and superb looking alternative! Even if you're not using Blood Knights, then the advice here can help you build a unique vampire of your own. ...DoN



To construct this Blood Dragon Vampire Knight, I used:

- 1 x Plastic Empire Barded Steed
- 1 x Metal 6th edition Chaos Knight Horse head
- 1 x Plastic Dark Elf Cold One Knight unarmoured head, torso, lance and shield arms, and legs
- 2 x Wood Elf banner tops with sprite
- 1 x Plastic Dark Elf Corsairs Sea Serpent icon
- 3 x Plastic Chaos Warrior trophy skulls
- 1 x 5th edition random warrior's shield
- 1 x Plastic Dark Elf shield icon

First off, I built the steed as normal, replacing its usual head with that of an old Chaos Steed.

I then built the Cold One Knight onto the steed, adjusting the fit of the legs to compensate for the difference in mount width. I cut off the pointed shoulder plates (which give the model that distinctive Dark Elf silhouette) and replaced them with some simple green stuff ones. The Plastic shoulder plates from the Grave Guard boxed set would have been ideal, but I don't own any due to the theme of my VC army (and £17 for 10 is just too much for me).

I then cut the hair off the plastic head and attached the serpent from the Corsairs box, then cut off the wings from the Wood Elf banner top and reshaped them a little before attaching them to his head as well. I sculpted a simple helmet onto him, but again a plastic Grave Guard helm (the ones with the bat wings) would have been very convenient for this part and would provide a similar effect.

I attached the shield with serpent icon, and the trophy skulls, and painted him up, job done. I think the result is surprisingly convincing. Depending on what parts you already have in your bits box, it may be a good way of saving money on Blood Knights (I believe they are £9 each or some such craziness).

Johnny B





Creating a Tournament List

Written by Count Flapula

Teachings of Abhorash – Advanced

“One list to rule them all,
One list to find them,
One list to bring them all
and in the darkness bind them.”
-un-named WHFB player... perhaps!

The above quote butchered in jest reflects the views of many typical tournament gamers: that there is one list out there, and all you have to do is find it, and then you’ll have complete dominion over your adversaries, win all your games, and get all the fame, glory, riches and women to go along with it. Sadly, dear readers, I have to inform you that this isn’t quite the case.

The main reason why there is no one uber-list, is simply that in this day and age, there is no single style of tournament. Generally you can expect a few games of 2000-2250 points, but that’s about the only common factor- you’ll find that no two tournaments are the same. And so, with different rules and composition systems, you must consider what style of event you’ll be playing in before you design your army list. And preferably without taking hits on comp or sports scores as well!

Generally speaking, there are three main differences with tournament. The biggest division deals with how the tournament deals with army composition- does it penalise you for taking a strong list, or perhaps it use hard restrictions, either specific (E.g. “Helm of Commandment may not be taken on a Vampire Lord”), general (“You may not use more than 9 power dice in your magic phases”) or both..? On the other hand, it might be entirely unrestricted, in which case anything and everything in

the army book is fair game. Another major aspect is how do you actually *win* the games? More and more tournaments are using scenarios these days, rather than straight-up pitched battles. Even the GW UK Grand Tournament, the last bastion of “pure” Warhammer, is using a selection of scenarios in its games. So sometimes taking a list designed around utterly destroying your opponents’ armies won’t be enough. Thirdly, the use of special characters divides a lot of gamers, and so divides many tournaments as well. In the UK at least, most tournaments just ban special characters outright, although a few do still let them through, including the UKGT. This doesn’t directly affect most VC armies as we don’t have the most over-the-top special characters, but it does affect what we could end up facing.

Comp

A couple of years ago, you could take anything and everything to most tournaments out there, with only Dogs of War and Storm of Chaos lists providing any differences between tournaments. This all changed with the release of the Daemons of Chaos army book, which is the most outrageously powerful army book ever released, and has dominated tournaments ever since, with the most win-at-all-costs power gamers leaping onto the army (Usually with a bland justification of “I played them in the old edition”). The Vampire Counts army book started the power surge, but the Daemons showed that there was no going back, and the Dark Elves and some other releases have certainly confirmed this. At the same time the older army books like Ogre Kingdoms and Beasts of Chaos, lacking the abilities to deal with many of the nasties in the newer army books, suffered and became even weaker in the grand scheme of things. And so, this brings us to today, with a clear tier system of the

armies' power, where most tournaments will have some system of comp in place to reflect this.

The simplest form of comp is simply the use of hard restrictions. This is quite popular and will often focus on a few specific areas: no triple special choices and no double rare are the most common, after which magic is usually the next to take a hit, with players typically limited to around 9-10 power dice, with bound spells such as the Book of Arkhan counting as a power dice. So your typical VC army, which might have a Level 3, Level 2 and Level 1 with 1-2 bound spells will usually count as around 10 power dice- but you won't be able to load up on Master of the Black Arts (commonly referred to as MotBA) for additional dice all over the place. Some tournaments will simply limit you by magic levels, 6 being a popular limit- although that does mean if you really want a nasty magic phase it's easily done, but slapping MotBA on three characters whilst sticking in the magic level limit. One side-effect of magic limits is that it can make some gamers expect to face less magic offence than in typical games, so may drop their magic defence as a result. However, it's quite usual to see players get away with as much magic as is possible, including any and all abilities that get around the comp, so if you think you can get away with low magic defence in this environment, you may be in for a nasty surprise.

Other areas hit can include terror causers, usually limited to two per army and flyers may be limited as well (including characters such as Vampires with Flying Horror). With shooting remaining so powerful, especially with Dark Elf armies, you may even see limits on shooting. They may also target races specifically, usually aimed at the "naughty" magic items, but without explicitly banning them, so the powerful items like Drakenhof Banner or Helm of Commandment may end up taking up an extra Hero slot or something similar. One thing it's worth noting is that if one army style has really dominated or caused complaints among a group of tournament-gamers, then it may take a hit at future events- one tournament in January that I'm going to has added a limit of Black and Blood Knights only having a maximum of 6 Knights per unit, after

a few fun-buses consisting of 10 Knights + 4 characters gave a few people some bad games.

If there aren't restrictions (And sometimes alongside them as well), the comp may take on another form, whereby players get bonus points or penalties depending on how powerful their force is. Typically they will take into account the basic power level of the army, which will see Daemons, Dark Elves and Vampires scoring low to begin with, and then judge them on how many of the toys and nasty combos they have. This might mean that if a nasty Vampire Count army faced a weak Orc and Goblin army, the Orcs will get several hundred bonus VPs, or some bonus tournament points at the end, depending on the difference in comp scores. Sometimes painting and sports scores are added to the mix – which are not supposed to gauge the power of the army – which have resulted in armies that have not scored many victories taking the top spots of tournaments! Often these tournaments will have a Best General award as well, so if you do stomp your opponents into the dust with a nasty army, you can still walk away with a prize.

The last bastion of comp, however, is "Timmy Comp", named after some nice chap of an aeon long since past (2007 or something). Here, after pre-submitting an army list, if it's just too damn nasty, it'll be sent back and the author told to come up with a fair army instead. Although that sometimes means they'll just drop one toy at a time and resubmit until the organiser gets bored and says okay, it does help keep the nastiest stuff at bay, which can only be a good thing.

It's important to gauge not only how this might affect your own army, but how the enemy armies will be affected. Limits on specials and rares are generally a good thing for Vampires, double Varghulfs are powerful but you can make up for losing one with more Knights or Wraiths, for example, because at the same time they'll be limiting the enemy: facing 12 Flamers, 2 Hydras or two of the Skaven's new Hellpit Abomination is too much for many armies to deal with. Dark Elf players also seem to enjoy spamming Shades, and limiting them to a couple of units (which may themselves be limited to only 10 or so models rather than the army's book limit which has no cap) is always a good thing. Gunlines are

also often hit, but Dwarf and Empire players are hardly known for having the nastiest lists, so you might still end up facing a couple of Cannons and machineguns. But the Steam Tanks are usually limited to one as well, which is far easier to deal with than when it has a twin.

The many toys of the Daemons will often take a hit here, with the -2LD Banner a prime candidate, along with the nasty Siren Song. Bloodthirsters are one of the nastiest things in the game and may be disallowed their Immortal Fury re-rolls to hit, which makes them a fair bit more manageable. All in all the limits tend to force players to bring forces that resemble actual armies – sometimes even with blocks of infantry! – and try and make the game about player skill more than who has the strongest action figure. It's worth noting though that no system is perfect, and there will often be something that slips through the comp system, which sucks, but 1-2 broken armies is generally preferable to 10-20. In theory, at least!

Scenarios

Ah, scenarios, everyone loves a good scenario. Well, not everyone, many people are strongly against them, because they make the game less about bashing your opponent in the face until his eyes bleed. Sometimes tournaments will have very minor scenarios – capture a building for a few hundred extra points, kill the enemy General etc. – and sometimes they're huge. Often they will involve capturing objectives, sometimes terrain, or getting units into your enemy deployment zones. Some take this even further, with the entire game being decided in this way, or by limiting who can capture them. Often single models will be unable to capture or claim the bonuses, along with fliers suffering too. Crucially for Vampire Counts, raised units will rarely count for claiming, so the VC strategy of raising a bazillion Zombies in turn 6 on the objectives will not necessarily work- which I find tends to make for a better game anyway. Usually units will need to be Unit Strength 5, and some tournaments say they must have a banner too. A common house rule in some tournaments is that the 100VP bonus for banners may only apply to the player who captures the most- meaning you can put standards in all your units

without having to worry too much about haemorrhaging victory points when things go badly!



Standards can be worth a lot of victory points but they're nice to see on the tabletop, and some tournaments reflect this!

At the UKGT the biggest scenarios are breaking through to your enemy's deployment zone, and capturing table quarters. Here, standard Victory Points do not count- there have been games where one army has entirely wiped out their opponents, but failed to claim the objectives, resulting in the draw. Never forget to play to the scenario! If you do have a list that works by destroying enemies, check ahead of time with the scenarios, to find out if you will still win if you wipe out your opponent, even if you haven't completed the objective! The other UKGT scenarios are a standard pitched battle, a game where you deploy in secret, and a game where units and characters are deployed in random areas of your deployment zone. This last one can be extremely nasty for Vampire Count players, as it can mean your Vampire Lord is left on his

lonesome rather than in a safe bunker. But the same goes for your opponents as well- how will they deal with not being able to cluster their entire army around the Ring of Hotek or the tasty leadership bubble of a Slann? The main worry for Vampires in this game is obviously having characters by themselves- you can limit the possibility of this with having more units that you can put characters in. Even if it's just 5 Dire Wolves and it looks silly, then that's better than nothing.

Some tournaments go even further, with crazy scenarios, spells going off all over the place, battlefield effects, and so on. Have a good read through the rules pack before designing your lists, especially if the games are decided by the scenarios, rather than just being bonuses.

One other extremely important thing to consider is the victory conditions, even with pitched battles. Some tournaments give full points no matter how much you win by, whilst others will have a "degrees of victory" system, where to get the biggest tournament points you must achieve as large a difference in victory points as possible. If it's a straight out win-is-a-win then a slow-moving infantry army should be able to grind out the victory, but if you need the big wins to be in contention, then a faster but riskier army, perhaps with a Lord on a Dragon, could be a better choice.

Special Characters

This is the final big division between tournaments- to SC, or not to SC, that is the question. Many tournaments do ban them outright, mostly because they perceive many special characters to be broken, and as a result don't want to see any of them used. In actuality, at the moment it's mostly just the Daemon Special Characters who are the most broken- I can barely think of any that I'd be opposed to facing, myself. Thorek Ironbrow is quite nasty to face, but was recently FAQed to lessen one ability, making him quite risky to use now. Teclis of the High Elves is also quite a pain, but considering his main strength is neutralised by a cheap magic item that is in nearly every list of the most popular tournament army (The Dark Elves' Ring of Hotek), you're less likely to

see him. A couple of Beastmen Special Characters can be really annoying to face, but with such a weak army, who can really complain?

However, with so many of the Daemon Special Characters being so broken, it gives VC armies a much easier time at tournaments where they are banned. The Masque of Slaanesh is probably the nastiest Special Character in general, so it's almost a shame, given that her abilities are lessened massively against Vampire Count armies. She can reduce a unit's Leadership or Movement values by D3" for a turn- which is nasty if you are using the Crown of Damnation, but her movement ability doesn't work on ethereal troops so that's nice for us. Skulltaker is just a big bad Khorne Herald (Without the Khorne Locus ability), just don't let him get in contact with your Lord and you should be fine. The Blue Scribes are especially nasty for us to face however, especially combined with Kairos Fateweaver, a powerful Lord of Change. The Scribes generate a bonus power dice for their army, for every spell cast- so beware invo-spammers when facing this style of Daemon army!

There's always other differences between tournaments as well- some might only let you claim 100 VPs for capturing standards, some might still allow Dogs of War. But whatever the tournament, always ensure you know the rules pack before you start putting your list together, as even a standard all-comers list that destroys your usual opponents may not be enough to see you through the day, against different opponents with different conditions!

With this in mind, I put my system of developing army lists suited to a tournament into practice. After a friend dropped out at the last minute I put together my army with a bit of thought, and away we went!

The Tournament

Destruction Derby 3, December in the north of England. Run by the “two Bens”, a pair of great chaps as close as you can get to Warhammer celebrities, having won numerous tournaments each, running the Bad Dice podcast, and even featuring in a White Dwarf battle report a short while ago!

The Games

3 games, 2000 points, no restrictions or comp whatsoever. White Dwarf lists and an unofficial Chaos Dwarf army were allowed too, but no-one brought anything like that. One fella was thinking about using Harry the Hammer though- but I don't think anyone will ever face him in a tournament.

The Scenarios

Ah, this is where it gets interesting! Each scenario had a wacky side to it. A quick summary:

Game 1) A Goblin Shaman sits in the centre of the table. The aim is to score as many wounds on him as possible, only ever wounding him on a 6; after being wounded or charged, he bounces back D6” for every wound taken, stopping in front of other units in his path. Plus, he also casts the Foot of Gork (D6 S6 hits) on any unit that wounds him! The wounds on the Goblin were all that counted in this game.

Game 2) Storm of Chaos- literally! Fliers were all grounded and shooting took a penalty to hit. Plus roll a dice for every unit at the start of the turn, on a 1 they are hit by lightning (D6 S4), if they have a ward save they are hit on a 1-2! Normal VPs for victory.

Game 3) This game had the Chaos spell Pandaemonium in play- so characters can't pass on their leadership to others, and all spells miscast on a double! On top of that, the Infernal Gateway randomly scatters across the battlefield each turn, hitting anything it touches. And if that's not enough, the only points available were for getting models into your enemy's deployment zone.

Creating the List

As I'm a fan of combat Vampires, I stuck with my tried-and-tested Vampire Lord with Red Fury and Forbidden Lore, plus Sword of Might, Cadaverous Cuirass, Book of Arkhan and Crown of the Damned. I could have fit a rasiing power onto him, but decided against it this time, 440 points on the Lord is more than enough! Backing him up would be a Vampire hero with Talisman of Lycni, Sword of Battle, Flayed Hauberk plus Infinite Hatred and Walking Death, as you never know when you'll fluff. I wanted to use the Flying Horror power, but as it would be useless in game 2, I made do with the Talisman. A Necromancer skulked around the back with a Dispel Scroll and the Black Periapt. The standard Gob-Sok Wight King Battle Standard with Sword of Kings and Gem of Blood rode with the army, eager to claim some nice skulls. My core was pretty varied, with a big block of 20 Skeletons with full command, plus some Ghouls with a Champion and some Zombies. It's not worth giving them a standard, as their role is usually to die horribly and I don't want them giving up 100VPs. Mindful of regenerating beasties, I put the Banner of Hellfire on my Skeletons, for flaming attacks to them and any characters in them. Some Dire Wolves were included, but no Fell Bats as they would be useless in one of the games. Big Grave Guard block with full works and Banner of Strigos (Mainly so my Lord gets hatred re-rolls) and some Black Knights were my specials, and the Varghulf took my rare slot. I usually take Wraiths, but do enjoying using the big V every now and then. Plus he can shake off lightning hits and the Foot of Gork better than Wraiths. My first opponent on the other hand saw the virtue of including both in his army!

Game 1 vs Vampire Counts

Up first was one Mister Blood, who had a pretty balanced list- he had a bit of a bus with 8 Black Knights with Banner of the Barrows plus a Vampire Dread Knight with Drakenhof Banner and Walking Death. The Lord, with Walach's Hauberk and Book of Arkhan and merely a level 3 with Dark Acolyte joined the unit. He had some Skeletons and Zombies for core, with a near-naked Necromancer and level 2 Vampire hero hanging back. With 4 Wraiths and Banshee and a Varghulf he had a lot of points in rare, but no chaff units at all!

Mister Blood won the roll for table sides, which was a pain, as there was a *biiiiig* forest in the middle of my deployment zone. This was bad because my plan revolved around my Lycni Vampire joining the Black Knights, positioned Wight King-Vampire-Champion, to give me 11 attacks on the pesky Goblin on the charge- but as the unit would lose their ethereal movement, he did not join them. Most of my army went left of the massive forest, away from the nasty enemy Knight unit, which was not positioned for a first-turn charge on the Goblin. There was also a massive river, but we decided to just ignore it at the organisers' recommendation!

My opponent won the roll for first turn, but barely moved. Magic saw some Zombies raised up behind the Goblin, but he couldn't Danse them in. I started off strongly, sending in the Black Knights with Wight King, and scoring two wounds on the little bugger (All attacks hit automatically against him)! However the Shaman then cast Foot of Gork... and wiped out all the Knights, leaving the Wight King on his lonesome! Despite being up by two points this was massively unlucky and left me lacking a fast hammer unit. The Gobbo was blasted back 8", past the Zombies which were being savaged by my Dire Wolves.

The enemy Skeletons bashed into the Goblin, doing a wound and sending him back a paltry 2", whilst the Strigoi Varghulf killed off my Dire Wolves- no great tragedy there! The enemy magic remained weak, but all his dice elsewhere were absolutely fantastic. My own Varghulf skipped past his into the Skeletons who had bashed the Goblin, as there

was a Necromancer begging to be assassinated, which he managed nicely. Meanwhile my Wight King skipped back into my Grave Guard, which was so loaded with characters I had to boot the Musician to the rear! The enemy Varghulf was in a nice position to be flanked by the Ghouls, who went in, and did not manage even a single wound over the course of the combat, whilst the Varghulf killed five Ghouls to begin with, then the remaining three in his turn.



The Varghulfs charge headlong into the opposing forces, ignoring the little Goblin!

I did manage to Danse my massive Grave Guard block in to the side of the Varghulf, and despite all my attacks, still only managed two wounds on him. Which the Varghulf matched back on my Lord! His luck couldn't carry him past losing combat by 7 or so however, and he finally crumbled.

Meanwhile the Wraiths claimed another wound on the Goblin bouncing back near the enemy Zombies- however my Grave Guard had just overrun into their flank. Despite a dozen attacks on the enemy Zombies and massive combat resolution, I could only kill 3, and 5 remained, denying me the overrun into the pesky Goblin. My Varghulf eventually crumbled, and the enemy Knights committed themselves to the fight- against my Zombies, bizarrely. Raised up to nearly 60 models, they spent the rest of the game hacking apart an 88 point unit...



War rages everywhere!

We both scored another wound on the Goblin, leaving Mister Blood at 4-3, but my Grave Guard were staring it down for a brutal last turn charge. Thus, in classic Vampire Counts style, he raised some Zombies, Danced them into the Grave Guard's flank with Irresistible Force and then raised to them once. At the end of the turn, a single Zombie remained, pinning the Grave Guard and all my characters into place- it

was all on 3 Skeletons, to see if they could beat down the Goblin... but I didn't roll any 6s to wound, so the game ended 4-3 to my opponent! We both scored 839 VPs as well, ignoring raised units, so it was as close a game as it could be. But having lost my Knights early, and with my opponent's dice being so hot, it was a tough game for me.

Game 2 vs High Elves

Playing against a clubmate for this one, he had a fun list with a Prince on Moon Dragon, with the Reaver Bow and Vambraces of Defence, plus a BSB wielding the Banner of the World Dragon and a Scroll caddy for his characters. Standard Archers for core, some Dragon Princes and White Lions and Chariot for special, plus a couple of Bolt Throwers and a Great Eagle for rare. This game sounded good for me, as his shooting was all at -1, and his Dragon and Eagle couldn't fly. I decided not to take Lore of Beasts for this game, as it would make it quite dull!

My army advanced steadily, my Dire Wolves getting in the way of the Dragon who could not fly over them. The lightning was deadly, killing a few models here and there and wounding my Varghulf turn 1. My opponent blew both his scrolls turn 1 to stop me healing the Varghulf and blasting his Archers with Gaze of Nagash, leaving me free to use the Book on some minor adjustments... which promptly ran out. He adjusted his line, blocking the Varghulf's charge on the Bolt Throwers with the White Lions and tried to shoot him as well, but failed and it was back to me. My opponent got lucky and failed his Archers' terror test after my Varghulf charged them; he had picked stand and shoot which would never do a thing, and the Archers would go on to rally and not give up any points, while claiming a quarter. The Varghulf had better things to kill after that and got the Bolt Throwers, whilst my Lycni Vampire rushed the other Archers with their Mage, killing him and eventually the Archers too. The lightning continued crippling my units, the only damage the High Elves took all game was two wounds on the Eagle, one on the Lion Chariot and a few on the Archers. The White Lions were hit a couple of times- but the Banner of the World Dragon protected them from Forked Lighting, boo!

Meanwhile I angled my Skeletons to “accidentally” give the Lion Chariot their flank, so in he went. He lost the first round thanks to my musician but held and then went on to hit and wound with every subsequent attack to kill all the poor Skeletons as my Zombies angled themselves to charge his rear. To add injury to insult my magic was atrocious, kept in check by his 3 dispel dice (and then his 2 when the Mage died), and when the Zombies charged the Chariot’s rear, he fled: if he rolled an 8 or less, I would just charge him again in the next turn, if he rolled a 10 or more he would hit the Grave Guard and die. No prized for guessing how far he fled, or that he rallied, charged the Zombies and then killed them all...

But, it was all about the big showdown, with the Dragon charging my Grave Guard, and the BSB also charging out to ensure that I couldn’t challenge out. This could get messy. I was only really worried if the Prince had the Talisman of Loecs (To force re-rolls as he whacked my Lord), as I knew from the Lightning and a few piddly shots from his bow that he didn’t have the Star Lance or full armour, but he didn’t have it. But, he didn’t need it, as he killed my Lord outright, gaining 5 unsaved wounds- getting 5 HITS would have been lucky, but this was me playing, and that was the end of my Vampire Lord. The BSB killed 2 more Grave Guard and even his Horse weighed in and killed another, but at least my champion got revenge and killed his BSB that turn. Having won combat by 1, I could have still got the Prince... but he passed his break test, and my army crumbled, the Knights rolled a 6-6, the Grave Guard rolling a 6-6 followed by a 6-4... you get the picture! Nearly everything died from crumbling and lightning, but at the end I still had my Varghulf and Lycni Vampire, and tempted the Dragon Princes to flank charge the Varghulf. They bounced and were eagerly run down by my angry Varghulf, to end the game having lost by 1000 points!

So two losses in a row, oh well! The Dragon charge was unfortunate, funny thing is with average dice, my Lord would have survived, then probably kill his Lord, break the enemy BSB and Dragon, and then either catch the Dragon or run him down next turn (As he would only be fleeing 2D6” in the storm), and won the game by a huge margin.

However, you simply can’t rely on average dice, so I should never have let the Dragon charge in the first place. Well played by my opponent!

Game 3 vs Lizardmen

My last game was against one of the top players in the country, with a reasonable Lizardmen list, but dice that sounded worse than mine. One good part of losing twice was that I was playing a sensible army, rather than one of the Bloodthirster lists or double Hellpit Abominations WAACing their way to the top tables. I was up against a semi-magicky Slann, Engine of the Gods with Wardrums, two Scar Veterans, two units of Saurus Spearmen and Skinks, two units of Terradons and some Cavalry. Another massive hill cut into my opponent’s deployment zone, so he split his army into two sections, with Slann, Engine, Saurus and one Scar Vet on my left side, and the rest on the right. I was a bit nonchalant and put my Knights and Wight King on the left side, and everything else on the right. The scenario was to break through, so I hoped my stuff could make it through his weak flank, whilst my Knights would die slowing down his big-boys. In theory. Bizarrely I took Lore of Beasts on my Lord, mostly just to try and get Bear’s Anger off, whilst my opponent went for Lore of Light, which has lots of low casting level spells, as Pandaemonium would hinder big casting attempts.

We both stormed forwards, and without anything better to cast I spammed the Zombies up to around 40 models. However, the Chaos Gods would not have that and the magical vortex in the centre of the table scattered right into my lines, and all my Zombies fell victim to Infernal Gateway!! Dayumm, these scenarios were absolutely devastating my forces- but at least that was only Zombies, and not my Vampire Lord’s unit right next to them. The Vortex meandered around the back of my deployment zone for the rest of the game, but didn’t come close to hitting anything. 40 models must have sated the Gods quite nicely!

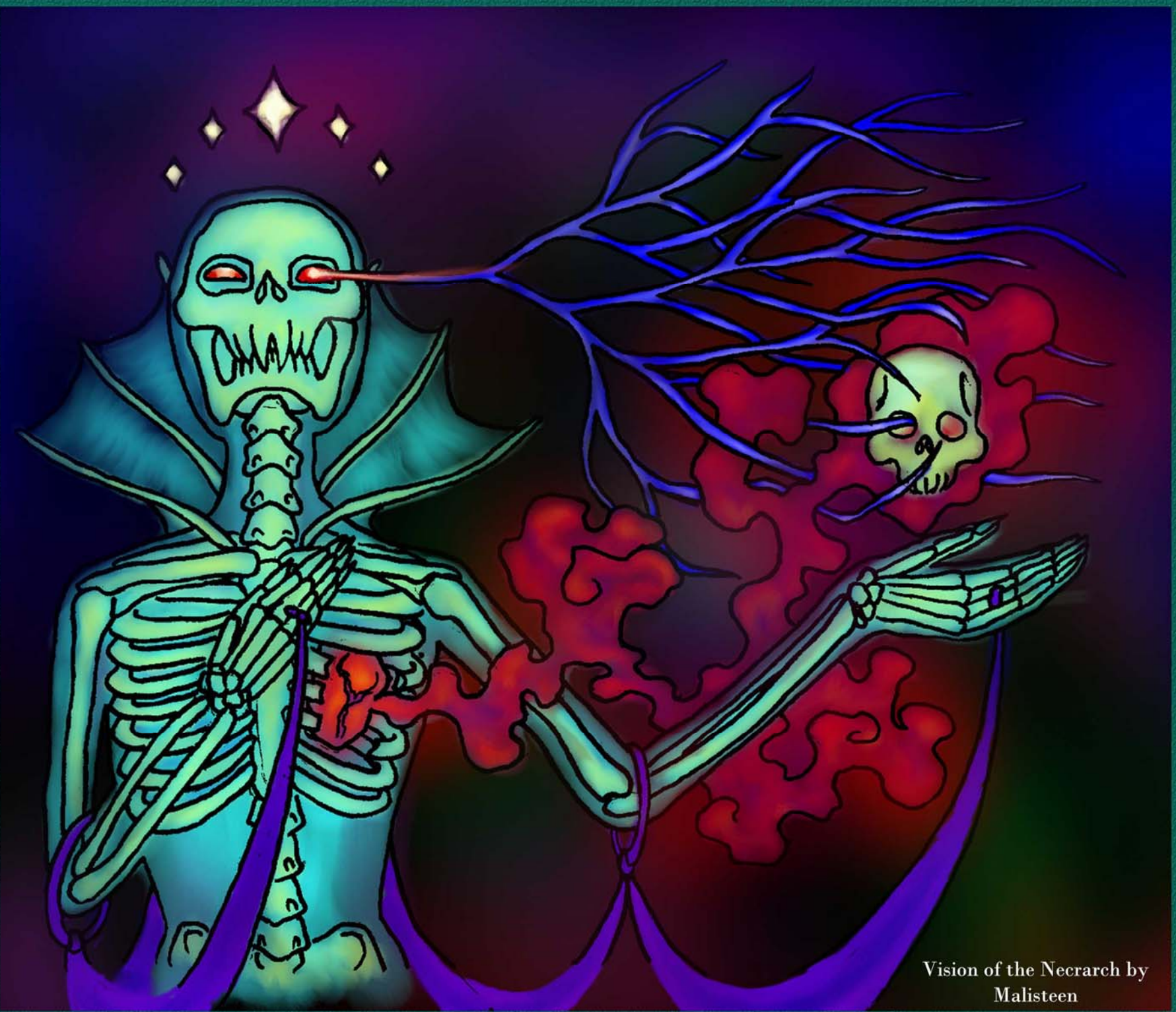
The Terradons started trying to redirect my nasties, but I wasn't having any of that, and my Wight King charged out from the Knights, into the Scar Veteran on the left, whilst my Varghulf did the same on the right, chasing the birds away and hitting the Cavalry with another Scar Vet. In an awesome combat phase, the Wight King decapitated the 0+ save Scar Veteran on the left, whilst the Varghulf killed 3 Saurus Cavalry and ran down the remainder including the Scar Veteran, panicking some Skinks away while he was at it- awesome stuff!

The enemy fought back with the Engine killing a couple of my Knights and wounding my King, who faded away against the Spearmen. But my opponent was really suffering with not being able to cast magic, or rather, trying to cast magic on 2-3 dice and miscasting nearly every time! Over the turns, the Slann lost the spell Cleansing Flare and was reduced to level 3 whilst the Skink Priest on the Engine knocked a wound off himself, which was nice. My Lord's Grave Guard broke through the Spearmen on the right, but would be hard pressed-to get to the enemy deployment zone. But the Wight King and Knights (Nicely healed with single-dice Invocations) held up the Lizardmen on the left exactly as planned, eventually dying, but ensuring that only the Engine, one unit of Skinks and one unit of Terradons made it to my deployment zone. Meanwhile my Lord dashed out her unit into the enemy deployment zone (almost waylaid by some Terradons, as he only managed one wound against them!), as did my Lycni Vampire and Varghulf, with their 18/16" moves adding their points to the mix- plus some raised Zombies for 50 points too! This gave me a very satisfying win against a top opponent to end the day with, so I was happy. It was interesting to note, had this been the UK GT, the only scoring unit to get to the other player's deployment zone would have been the 10 Skinks worth 50 points- but that would have been enough for the win!

Conclusion

Well with just the one win, would I still say my strategy was sound? Pretty much, yes! It was interesting to note that my first opponent had come to the same conclusions as myself, dropping his flyers, whilst my next two had left them both in. But the Lizardmen player really suffered with two crucial units useless in his second game. On top of that with his powerful magic neutered by the third scenario it (And on top of appalling dice), it helped turn a top player into someone at the bottom of the heap (A heap of very good players, mind you!).

I was pleased with how my own army worked, the first game came down to the classic VC tactic of Zombie tarpits delaying my hitty units, and in the second game my only problem was not taking enough care with my general- which is asking for trouble. Of course, in the third game, the scenario was asking for me to just spam repeated invocations out, and this is the only thing that makes me wish I'd change my army list a little- without Lord of the Dead on my Vampire Lord, all I had to do was invoke Zombies, Zombies and more Zombies- which got Gateway'd anyway! There really was no reason not to take it, but oh well, live and learn. And even if you're not winning tournaments, as long as you're having fun and learning lessons to help you do better in the next one, then it's all good. And there will be more, 2010 is shaping up to have an absolute boatload of great tournaments- and with other armies hogging the limelight, the Vampire Counts will surely be able to strike from their shadowy crypts to reclaim their place at the top of the pile...



Vision of the Necrarch by
Malisteen

Army Showcase

Vampire Counts army by Markof

Another army that is instantly recognisable on Carpe Noctem, is the superb forces painted by Markof. An expert conversionist and painter, is selected colour scheme of green whilst unusual, looks frankly stunning. So readers, prepare yourself for a visual delight.....*Disciple of Nagash*

Vampire Lord – Mannfred von Carstein Conversion



Other Vampires



Wight Kings



Skeletons



Ghouls



Grave Guard



Dire Wolves



Fell Bats



Zombie Giant



This is aimed at green stuff users in general but hopefully everyone will be able to take something useful from it. Instead of writing some rambling waffle, I'd like to keep it to the point, so it's a bit abrupt. Please note I am entirely self-taught, so cannot be held responsible for any outrageous, misleading habits that I may work in.

Greenstuff basics:

Mixing: A bit more blue than yellow, about 60:40 is generally the best ratio to mix. GW GS usually comes in something approaching that, although other places sell better quality GS at better prices.

Water: Fingers and tool should be moist but not soaked when dealing with GS. Too much water and it gets underneath the GS and it comes away from the model, too little and it sticks to your fingers and tools.

Lamping: Heating GS makes it cure faster. A desk lamp with exposed bulb will do fine. Leave the sculpt a few centimetres from it, and it should cure in 2-3 hours.

Note: This sounds obvious but plastic melts. This technique isn't advisable on work done onto a plastic figure. Unless he's Nurgle, in which case anything goes.

Mistakes: If you get it wrong and it's already cured, you can simply cut the offending piece of sculpting off and start again. GS generally comes away easily from metal and plastic if you lever it off with a knife/sculpting tool.

Smoothing: Use the flat of your sculpting tool/knife to ensure flat surfaces are actually flat, and edges are straight. Wet it a little, and push

it back and forth gently over the surface a few times. Use the edge of your (wet) finger to smooth organic shapes and remove fingerprints. GS can also be filed like plastic when dry, so this is also an alternative.

Symmetry: When sculpting something symmetrical, there's an old artist's trick to judge whether it's symmetrical or not: just look at it upside down and you should be able to tell if it's wonky. Sounds ridiculous, but it works.

Easy stuff to sculpt: One of the best places to start is adding hair or fur to a figure. It can look pretty random, doesn't need to be symmetrical or geometric and always looks good painted.

Tricky Stuff to sculpt: Men are easy, women are difficult, just like real life. Horses, hands, faces, feet, fangs, all of these are tricky to sculpt.

Aftermath: Be prepared to pick little bits of GS out of your carpet and socks. Such is the mark of a true Greenstuffer.

Sculpting stuff

Before you dive in at the deep end, some basic tips from someone who did just that and found some helpful clues on the bottom.

1: Context: Before you begin, consider if it fits with the rest of the figure or army (or diorama or whatever). Right size, appropriate aesthetic, etc.

2: What does it look like: Have a clear idea of what it is that you are making. If you can't picture it in your head, you won't be able to make it. If you are artistic, try drawing it. Try the figure's pose yourself to see if it is feasible. On humanoids, the centre of gravity is directly below the head, something to bear in mind when posing it. Also, for example, if the figure's cloak billows in one direction and the unit banner billows in another, this will look very strange indeed.

3: Reference material: If you don't know for sure what something looks like, get a picture of it off the net or out of a book. If you are sculpting a creature, get a book on anatomy or get medical diagrams off the net to look at skeletal and muscle structure. If you're sculpting armour, get some reference on armour and its function. Get other figures of a similar type. Even if you have a good working knowledge of these things, it always helps.

4: Neatness first: Something simple done neatly always looks better than something intricate done badly. Be careful not to overreach yourself; it's good to be ambitious but be realistic as well.

5: Take your time: Do things in stages, don't try to sculpt too much in one session. First sculpt the cloak and then when it's dry you add the fur, etc.

Sculpting from Scratch

This is where it gets really fun, and also very vague, as people have their own styles and ways of doing things. This part is assuming the figure will be a one-off for gaming.

Step 1: The Armature. Make an armature from wire to support the figure. If you don't do this, bits of it may drop off. Wire of various sizes is available from modelling/hardware shops. For especially thin bits, like fingers on large models, paper clips will suffice.

As ever, blood is the key to great properties, also relating to the spread of a/s er relating to the magick be sure to meagre, be resonance, mited, fly, as pure, soul,



Oni Varghulf WIP. Underneath the GS is a complete wire skeleton.



For all the strange people at various tournaments who suspect loudly to their friends that he's made of Goblins and Tyranids: He isn't.

Step 2: The Basic Shape. Add GS in a rough humanoid (or whatever it is) shape. No need to be neat at this stage, just ensure it isn't too thick as you will be sculpting the outer layers onto it.

Looking absurd at this stage is fine. It's later on that you need to worry about.

Step 3: Compare. I generally have another model of the same type to compare the figure to as I'm working. This helps ensure it's the right size. If there is no suitable peer, draw or make a scale silhouette of the final product to compare it against.

Step 4: Sculpt away. Start with the inner layers and parts that will be difficult to reach later on. Do it in segments and, most importantly, have fun.



That beard can't be real.



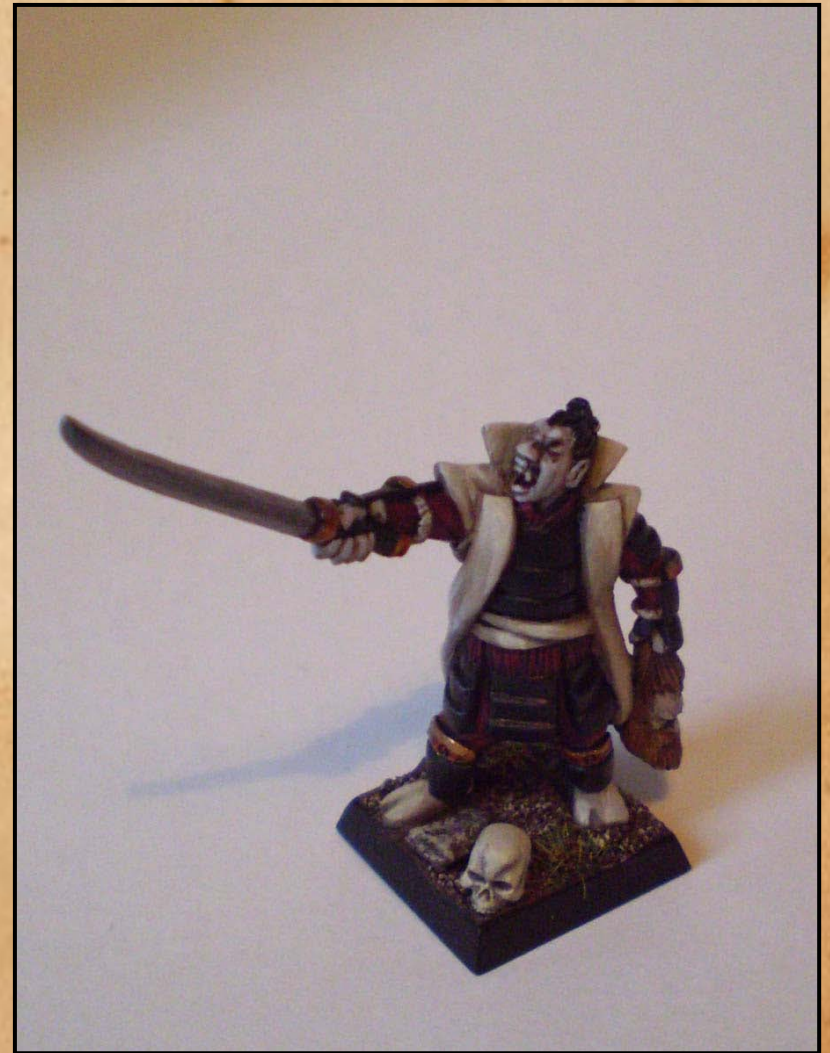


After 20 of these, I never want to see another suit of Samurai armour ever again.



Sneaky...





What do you mean, 'I have to stay in a bunker'?

The Children of Maat

Written by The Pale Lady

Book 1: A Law Unto Her Own - Chap. 5-8

Chapter 5: The Sands of Time

IC -1163

It was early morning, the sun just winking over the horizon, and the Bitter Sea was anything but. Its waves were calm, not their usual malevolent selves but pitifully weak, as though afraid to attract the attention of that which sailed their waters.

A shape slipped smoothly through the rising mist, quiet as the dead. The barque was of Nehekharan design, but was far from typical of any other to be found in the ports of the Great Kingdom. Huge chunks of gristly bone served as the mast pole, and adorned the rigging. Tendon, rubbery and dry with age, bound the macabre ship together, and moth-eaten banners hung, resplendent nonetheless, from the sides of the soundless vessel. Their insignia was unmistakable.

The sleek ship cut through the water as true and straight as an arrow, although the deck was deserted. Gone were the bustling sailors, heaving and sweating at the oars. Gone were the slaves, who drenched the deck in salt water, and fed the hungry belly of the ship with cargo. Gone was the Sea Master, his bellowing voice replaced by the sighs of the wind.

The living had no place aboard this monstrous vessel.

Uneven ruins rose into sight on the distant shore. They stood, black and jagged, against the fiery red of the rising sun, a deathly silhouette, serving as a reminder for all foolish enough to sail these waters of the evil that once festered there, corrupt and corpulent. Only those with a death-wish made port at that cursed place now. Only those who sought to die, mad and alone, amidst the haunted ruins of Lahmia, walked those bloody sands.

The ship sailed closer, as softly as a dead man's sigh. Wreathes of mist snaked out, keeping pace with the rotting barque, never seeming to move but always behind it, trailing. Once they almost caught up, threatening to swallow the wood and bone, and envelop it in their chilling coldness, but the ship slid smoothly, unscathed, from their grasp.

Waves lapped pitifully against the hull of the ship, as though loathe to touch it, yet desperate to encourage it on its way. Had they known what dwelled within, waiting patiently to dock, and rejoin with land once more, they would have left the ship to its own devices. Even the wind was quelled, reduced to a whisper on the air, quiet and impotent.

Passing through the ruined sea-gates and into the Lahmian bay, the graceful ship began to slow. As the broken heights of the Lahmian docks rose up, cracked and burned, around it, the ship became two, then three, then a dozen, as more and more of the macabre vessels slipped from out of the concealing mist and into the bay.

A score, then two dozen, then three, the mist regurgitated the unnatural barques. The slim, decaying vessels slid into port alongside each other, directed by some greater will. Freed from the horror that had transfixed it, the Bitter Sea slapped ineffectually at the now creaking hulls of the ships. Stay away, it seemed to say, do not take to my seas again.

The first figures staggered from out of the gloom below deck, stepping awkwardly onto the wooden boards. Their bleached bones clicked, and empty eye-sockets stared unseeing at the carcass of once mighty Lahmia.

The fleet of Nagash emptied itself onto the bloodied flagstones of the cursed city.

Time. It had done little to ease the anguish that poisoned Maatmeses' heart. As she stood in the blackened ruins of the Temple of Blood, the revenant shades of men long dead met her gaze. She watched them as they strode across the temple antechamber, their insubstantial figures wavering in and out of consistency, trapped in a re-enactment their final moments for all eternity. They were like shadows, wisps of memory given some semblance of form. Their lips moved silently as they walked through toppled statues and flame-charred walls. She could not tell whether they were products of her imagination, shades called back from the grave to haunt Lahmia's broken streets, or a mixture of both. Her ancient eyes glistened.

The time for vengeance was upon them. Now, at long last, the Nehekharans would pay for their war crimes. Maatmeses had learned much in the dripping, stagnant bowels of Nagashizzar, their dark god himself teaching the surviving vampire masters the twisted intricacies of necromancy. It had been difficult beyond comprehension, and she had been slow to learn, but every day she had devoted to practice was a grain of sand in the right direction, and now her arcane knowledge was more than a match for anything she could remember the priests of the Great Kingdom being capable of.

The ancient vampire pulled at the straps of her breastplate, tightening it, and stalked from the despondent temple. She had been much changed by the time spent in Nagashizzar. They all had.

For one, Neferata had been stripped of her rank. The cunning bitch was no more a queen than Maatmeses was now, and instead her husband Vashanesh had risen as their captain. Nagash himself had appointed the Lahmian king as their master, and against his incomparable will not even the Queen of Lahmia could contest. That alone had brought her deep-seated satisfaction, in the early years of their arrival. She had found nothing quite as rewarding as watching their once glorious queen rant and rave her displeasure.

Neferata was as powerless against the Great Necromancer as the mortals were against her.

A grin split Maatmeses' face, the expression all the more daemoniac for her years in the company of Nagash and his ilk. Her mouth was a mesh of needle-like fangs, and her once bronze flesh had faded slightly in the absence of the Nehekharan sun. Her cheeks had become sunken, giving a strained, feral turn to the once High Justice's face.

Perhaps it was the years of exposure to the Great Necromancer's precious warpstone, she mused as she strode from the shattered maw of the Temple of Blood and into the light of day. It had certainly corrupted the visage of their lord, transforming him beyond all recognition, turning him into a reeking, rotting horror the likes of which she had never before seen. It was no stretch of the imagination to believe that the corrupt substance had affected her own appearance in some way.

Her delving into the necromantic arts was another possible explanation. W'soran was a walking example of what prolonged use of Dhar could do to one's body. The previously malnourished vampire had grown ever more emaciated since his extensive experiments into death and necromancy. He rarely left Nagash's side, like some Khemrian hound, eager for any scraps of ancient lore or prophecy that was tossed his way by their master. That his extensive efforts had proved fruitful, she could not deny; the scholarly vampire was by far the most proficient of their number at spell casting. The innermost secrets of necromancy were at his discretion and he gave little away, jealously hoarding what macabre knowledge he accumulated and sharing only a little of that with his own priests.

He had also paid the highest price for his potent skills. With leathery flesh and skeletal limbs, his withered corpse of a body said it all: toy with the wind of Dhar, and suffer the consequences.

Outside it was still morning, but already the sun's heat was intense, searing the vampire to her core and cooking her insides. She walked down the long flight of cracked stairs, to join the rest of Nagash's lieutenants, her bronze armour winking in the sunlight. This is what she must have felt like to be condemned to the desert, she thought. It was a punishment she had frequently heaped upon the murderers and thieves of Lahmia, driving long spears through their limbs and pinning them to the desert sands. The lucky ones were devoured by carrion, their innards ripped out and consumed by the ravenous birds. Those less fortunate were left there, driven mad by the heat, until their desiccated corpses were removed and replaced with fresh criminals.

Grim nostalgia drew laughter from the vampire, a dusty hiss escaping her throat.

She missed the old days. She missed the authority and satisfaction that came with being High Justice. Now she was a Dark Lord, a lieutenant of Nagash, a captain of his unholy legions. Rewarding, yes, but it was not the same.

She needed her vengeance. It was a long time coming, and the years had done nothing to diminish it. If anything, the desire for retribution had taken root in her, unmoveable, revenge as much a part of the woman as her blood thirst, or her very name.

"You are finished in the temple, Maatmeses?" It was W'soran. She nodded, and his lips split into a tight smile. "Then we are ready. We have taken Lahmia uncontested, but the rest of Nehekhar still awaits our attention! From the eastern shores to the furthest reaches of the Great

Desert, the mortals cower in their petty kingdoms. Lybaras, Mahrak, Quatar, Zandri, Numas and Khemri, all are soft and weak and afraid. They must die.” Vashanesh interrupted, his own voice belying an aura of majesty and authority that W’soran could never hope to achieve.

“This day we mark the beginning of the end for the priest kings and their subjects. They will fall before our limitless hordes and deadly magics and like a plague of locusts we will descend on them and devour them, in the name of Lahmia, and Nagash!” The six master vampires snarled and laughed, their hearts swelled with confidence and hunger. The deserts will run red with the blood of mortals. Their corpses will turn the seas themselves crimson and stagnant. All of Nehekhara will be theirs, and the glory of Lahmia restored!

“We have waited so long.” said Harakhte, his ruby eyes turned skyward. Ushoran laughed, a cold, hard sound, devoid of human emotion.

“Too long, my brothers and sisters. But now we are set free, unleashed upon Nehekhara to do our lord’s bidding and none shall stand against us! The blood, just think of the blood!

“For Nagash!” shouted Vashanesh, his bestial rage carrying far into the sky. The Great Necromancer had taught them the ways of necromancy. He had promised them their Lahmia, resurrected to its former glory. He had shown them the light in their time of darkness. As one, the vampires began to chant.

Their tongues spat corruption; venomous words that had no right to be spoken aloud filling the air and turning it thick with dark magic. A fierce wind raced through the decaying city, unsettling ruins and scattering sand to the skies.

Above all their voices, one sounded stronger and more powerful, harnessing the winds of magic and bending them to his will as slaves to a king. W’soran screamed and chanted, incantations flying fast from split, bloody lips. He raised his hands, long black robes buffeting his frail form.

And all across the desert graveyard that was Lahmia, the dead stirred. Skeletons that had sailed down from Nagashizzar with their undying masters stood side by side with the brittle bones of those long buried beneath the shifting sands. Generations of ancient nobles woke in their mausoleums, reborn as wights - fathers, sons and grandfathers strode slowly from their tombs, enchanted blades clutched in mailed fists. Even the ghouls, degenerate men that on Nagash’s command had accompanied the vampires, crouched and leapt and howled their fury at the dark winds as they swept the city.

Thick grey clouds converged on the clear blue sky, concealing the blasphemy that was wrought below from the eyes of the sun, and the creatures of the night, the ghouls and ghosts and ghastrs, screamed with triumph.

Then the vampire lords themselves stirred, breaking from the casting of their unnatural magics to lead their armies across the golden desert and into battle.

Maatmeses flushed with decades old excitement. Anticipation flooded her ancient veins. The time for vengeance had come. It was now. It was

here! A thousand bitter memories came swarming back into her mind: of her murdered children, Gehb, Eshe, Khait and the others, of friends lost, Abhorash first and foremost, of her laws flaunted and disgraced, and of her home - her city - torn down from around her. Desperation welled up like a desert spring inside the vampire, soulful and earnest.

“Beware, men of Nehekhar,” she screamed aloud, “for I am Maatmeses, and I come to claim my blood debt!”

His chest burned. His vision blurred. Something splattered against his face and he smeared it away, crimson staining his forearm. Fear enveloped him and the Nehekharan captain stumbled back, slipping in the sand.

Another orc charged, its yellowing teeth rotten and slick with the blood of his regiment. As the green behemoth bore down on him, he hurled his sword arm forward. Words escaped his lips, tearing his throat raw. Everything seemed to slow down.

The orc grimaced, its tiny red eyes glinting furiously. It swung back its arms, great green ham fists clutched around enormous cleavers. The weapons were brutal in their simplicity: They were no more designed to cut flesh as they were to mash it to pulp.

A flurry of white-fletched arrows smacked into the monster and it stumbled forwards. Green-black blood spurted from its eye where two of the wooden shafts had entered, boring into its brain.

With an unintelligible gurgle the orc fell and died.

All around him, Captain Ammon’s men fought for their lives. Spears lashed out, impaling the thick-skinned monsters and drawing their unnatural blood even as their axes and cleavers wrenched the Khemrians apart. They were only men. Thin-skinned. Lean. They were like children stood next to the massive bulk of the orcs.

The sun scorched their flesh, dazzling off the bronze-gold armour of the Nehekharans, and the slimy red of the orcs’ tusk-like teeth. The battle had been raging for hours, and Ammon’s men were at their wit’s end. They had no energy left. They were spent. The walking dead. He had to end it, soon.

Another cloud of arrows descended into the fray, the guttural cries of the orcs drawing some small respite from the captain. He had fought their kind before, on many an occasion. They swarmed down from the mountains, the green hordes burning and pillaging all they encountered. More than one tomb had been ransacked by this particular force, and such looting could not be tolerated. The necropolises were sacred, and ancient, and not for the depredations of the green ones.

It had been easy to locate them. Their stench carried far on the desert winds, a mixture of sweat, blood and faeces. It was unmistakable in its nausea, and it had taken only days to track them.

The orcs had been waiting.

Darting forward, Ammon came face to face with another of the beasts. Sweat clung to its green flesh in a translucent sheen, and a myriad of skulls stared vacantly back from around its waist, reminding Ammon of the fate that awaited him, if he so much as slipped. There was no room for mistakes.

“Djaf watch over me,” he muttered, invoking the feral jackal god even as he brought his sword stabbing upwards. It sunk into the orc’s throat and stuck fast there, a stream of unclean blood dripping down its silvery blade.

It was an economical blow, playing to both Ammon’s speed and his enemy’s weakest spot. If the man was anything, he was an efficient killer.

The orc grunted and took Ammon in its mighty arms, crushing him, breaking bones and bruising flesh even as it choked its last. Something snapped inside him and the captain screamed, pain exploding throughout his body. This was not how it was supposed to be. He wouldn’t die at the hands of some green-skinned barbarian! He would not!

Tears of pain stung at his eyes and he gasped desperately for air. Blackness crept over his vision, shadows growing in the corners of his eyes. The sounds of battle stretched out.

Almost instantly the orc’s bear hug loosened and he slipped, helpless as a new-born child, onto the sands. His battered breastplate rose and fell as he gulped great mouthfuls of fresh air. He hated the orcs, he thought bitterly, as though thinking it might banish them all suddenly from the face of the Great Desert. They came, and then died, and a year later they came again. They were as numerous as the tombs of the dead, and like the tombs, there were always more. Always.

Ammon rolled over and struggled to his knees.

“Give me swarms of scarabs any day.” He hawked and spat, to clear his throat. Redness trickled from his lips, and it felt as though the River Vitae itself was rushing through his head.

A keening cry went up, but it was not the scream of a dying soldier. It was the wail of the wounded, the sound that men made when the battle was over and they actually had time to stop and look at the gaping cuts and purple flesh that covered them. He had heard it a hundred times before. It was the sound of realisation, of shock, as the men felt for the first time their ravaged bodies. He scanned his surroundings.

The orcs all lay dead, mounds of green muscle and fat. At least three score of the green ones’ corpses covered the sands, limbs askew, their flesh already spoiling in the fierce heat of the sun. He resisted the urge to gag and rose shakily to his feet.

“They are numerous this year. I have not fought against such numbers of the green-skinned ones in living memory, Ammon.” A man strode up

behind the ungainly captain, his olive-skinned flesh green with the blood of their enemies. Talamanke had known Ammon since their days as youths, when they had both joined the city guard together. It had not been long before they had risen through the ranks, eventually joining the glorious army of King Alcadizzar. Their affinity with all manner of weapons made them versatile and deadly opponents. Ammon himself had only been made captain over Talamanke on accord of his more affable personality: the man loved to smile, loved to laugh, loved to drink, and it had won him over in the eyes of his comrades. Talamanke was too quick to criticise. He was not a detestable person, but his sharp tongue had earned him more than one black eye.

They were as opposite banks of the River Vitae, both part of the whole, but different sides of it. Ammon nodded to his closest friend.

“You are right, Talamanke. They are stronger too, more desperate. I thought, for a moment then, that I might be walking from the fight down the ways of the underworld.”

“Perhaps you’re getting old, my friend,” said Talamanke, his eyes glittering. Ammon grinned. He was getting old! That did not stop him from outmatching those half his age in kills. With age came skill. Experience, he noted, counted for a lot.

“At least your sense of humour survived the encounter.”

“It would take a lot more than some foul orc to slay that,” said Talamanke, also smiling. It lasted but a moment before his face reverted to its stony self. “Something must be driving them down from the mountains, pushing them into the desert.” It was a disconcerting thought. Anything that could possibly drive the war-mongering orcs out from their lands was a threat to Nehekhara, for sure. The beasts lived to fight, to battle and to die. In that they were as predictable as the rising sun. What in all the Great Desert could drive an orc to flee, and not fight?

The groans of the wounded had subsided into a low murmur, and as Ammon watched, his men began helping each other to their feet. The injured sagged against the shoulders of their comrades, the battle having taken a vicious toll. Over half of his regiment sported wounds. Their blood stained the sands.

“Come on,” he said, his voice heavy. “Let’s head back to Khemri.”

“What’s the hurry, Ammon?” Movement caught the corner of the captain’s eyes, and before he could so much as shout a warning, a bloated vulture had descended from the skies onto the bodies of one of his men. Its cruel beak rent at the dead man’s flesh, ripping great strips of it away to sate the mangy bird’s hunger. Within seconds two soldiers had seen and run at it, swords waving, and with a hate-filled glare the bird took flight. Ammon frowned.

“I am tired. The men are tired. We need to return, and rest. I will feel much better once we are safe behind Khemri’s walls.” Talamanke did not argue.

Within three days the Khemrian regiment had made it back to their capital, the city rising out of the horizon long before they reached its gates. It was an uneventful trek; this close to the Nehekharans' city, the only threat was that posed by the punishing heat. Even the deadly scorpions and snakes that concealed themselves beneath rocks and under the very sand were of no concern to the Khemrians. They had grown up in the desert. They knew how best to avoid them.

Despite this, the men were weary. The battle with the orc warband had taken it out of them; the creatures had fought with a ferocity that was rare, even in their green-skinned kind. Fear had driven them into a frenzy, which, coupled with the maddening effect the intense sunlight had on their psyches, and the orcs' natural tendency toward battle-lust, had made them brutal and monstrous opponents. The manner in which over half of the survivors hobbled and limbed their way across the undulating dunes made this much obvious.

Even before their glorious city rose into view over the golden sands, Ammon saw it. They all did. Its presence was like a blight on the landscape, unmoveable, impervious to harm, a tumour at the heart of Khemri that none could remove. Its mere sight cast a chill shadow on their souls.

The Black Pyramid of Nagash.

The blasphemous edifice towered over the heights of Khemri, fifty times the size of even the Great Pyramid of Settra. Nothing could compare to its vastness, the sheer magnitude of the pyramid was breathtaking. It was a monument to tyranny, to betrayal, to murder and black magic. Everyone who saw it trembled, for they knew the atrocities that had been committed in the lightless bowels of the ancient structure, far from the blazing heat of the sun.

Far from the eyes of the gods.

It was an eternal testament to the priest Nagash and his immitigable evil, an all-encompassing evil that had matured on a diet of fear, hatred, jealousy and loathing. The priest had been mad, and dangerous, and had abused his position in the king's court to his own ends. The very gods had trembled as the disillusioned liche priest had perverted the secrets of the mortuary cult, warping them into something altogether more horrifying in its sacrilege, or so Ammon had read.

He suppressed a shiver and, with a last, wary glance at the ancient monument, walked off toward Talamanke.

There was a quiet knock at the door. It wasn't so much a knock as a thud, as something soft and heavy fell against it. From the imagined safety of his bed sheets, Ammon waited. His chest neither rose nor fell, the man's chamber a motionless silhouette in the moonlight. Then, quietly, a scrabbling, as someone or something sought to gain entry. The man was reminded instantly of the many cats that filled the city, coming and going from houses, temples and even the palace as though they owned it all. That's right. It was probably just a cat. The revered beasts cared little for the sanctity of night, so long as they were fed and lathered with attention.

The scrabbling got louder, more desperate.

Slowly Ammon rose from his bed and approached the door. It was just a cat, he convinced himself, repeating the sentence again and again through his mind. It was just a cat. It was just a cat. There was nothing to fear here, at the heart of mighty Khemri itself. He was as safe as King Alcadizzar himself, protected from their enemies by the towering city walls and the countless guards posted there. He swallowed the lump that had matured in his throat and took the last few steps toward the door. It was just a cat. It was just a cat.

“Ammon.”

He froze.

“Ammon, let me in.” It was Talamanke. He could tell from the voice. He had heard it pronounce his name a thousand times over, and recognised it instantly. The man sounded pitiful. There was an edge to his voice that shouldn’t have been there. Was he hurt? Anxiety flourished like a sickness in his heart, nurtured by the night breeze that decided then to play with the balcony curtains. They billowed into the room and assumed shapes from Ammon’s darkest fears, taunting him.

He reached out for the door. If Talamanke was hurt, he needed help. Ammon shook his head to clear them of his irrational thoughts. He was captain of one of Khemri’s finest regiments, for Ptra’s sake, not some cowardly street trader! Such unnatural panic was not becoming, and far from professional. He reached out and opened the door.

The thing that spilled into his arms was anything but Talamanke.

It half fell, half pushed Ammon, and the two tumbled over. It was heavy, and stank of sweat and blood. In the darkness he could not properly make out its features, but its clothes were ragged and torn to shreds. Putrid breath washed over him and he coughed violently.

“Ammon.” it crooned, managing awkwardly to right itself. Ammon’s limbs were pinned by a strength far greater than his own. It was unnatural strength, bred of desperation and eagerness. This thing was not letting him go.

“Talamanke?”

“Yes, Talamanke! Talamanke, Talamanke, Talamanke,” it said, breathing its foetid breath again. “Talamanke is hungry! So very hungry.”

It leaned in suddenly, and in the spot of moonlight Ammon could make out the features of his friend. They were scarred, and grimy, and a crusted redness trailed down from his lips. Several of its teeth were missing, and an expression of hunger marred its face.

Then the captain looked up, and his shout of surprise filled the chamber.

Talamanke had no eyes. Two gaping holes were all that remained of them, black and bottomless. He could not tear his own gaze away, even as his friend's face descended, jaws open, ready to savage his face.

Ammon leapt up from his bed, the thin sheets falling about him. A sheen of perspiration covered the captain, plastering his slick hair to his forehead. His breath came in ragged bursts.

It had been a dream. Just a dream. Nothing more.

"Thank the gods," he said fervently. Collapsing back into his bed, Ammon waited for his heart to catch up with the realisation that he was safe. It was racing faster than the king's wife, Khalida, when she rode her chariot, and rightly so.

The ghoulish image of Talamanke lingered in his mind. It had seemed so real, down to the stench of the beast's breath and the deathly hollows of its empty eyes. Never had he seen such a monster before. It was detestable in its resemblance to his friend, his stomach turning at the obscene parody. The thought of it repulsed him. There was nothing so grotesque in all the Great Desert. He of all people should know. He had lead the armies of Nehekhara against their every foe, from the vile green-skinned ones to the treacherous desert nomads, and even the stunted ones, when they despoiled the necropolises with their hammers and their gold-fever.

Why did the gods mock him with such morbid and monstrous creatures in his sleep? Ammon did not deserve such nightmarish taunts, of that he was certain.

A quiet sound pricked the captain's ears, and the hair on the back his neck stood up. His nightmare resurfaced, screaming violently back into his head.

There was a scratching at the door.

It was only quiet, but in the silence of the night it sounded like every spirit of the underworld was raking his door with their ancient claws.

Any calm that had settled over his heart was lost as it exploded back into action. It beat so fiercely that he was sure that whatever it was outside his door could hear it, slamming over in his chest.

The vision of eyeless Talamanke leered up from the shadows, grinning, starving, desperate to bite at his face and eye and mouth and chew on his flesh, and Ammon started. His mouth felt like the Great Desert. Fear was not something the captain was familiar with, and it gnawed away at his resolve.

The scrabbling got louder, and something bumped softly against the wall. He heard the muffled thud as it knocked against it.

Fire flashing in his eyes, Ammon jumped to his feet. In three large steps he snatched up his spear, and stormed toward the door. His veins boiled. No nightmarish ghoul would get the better of Ammon, Captain of the Third Asp Cohort of Khemri. Courage smouldered inside of him.

“I am coming, Talamanke.”

Reaching out, he threw open the door and lunged forward with his spear, his only protection from the nightmare made real. A snarl spat from his lips.

He stumbled forward. There was no-one there.

The cat slipped idly through his legs, rubbing up against them as it passed. A deep purr rattled from its throat as it melted into the shadows of his bedchamber. Then it was gone, and Ammon was alone again.

Slowly, the fire faded from his eyes. A protracted sigh seeped into the corridor, and his chest, swelled with bravado, sank wearily down. Talamanke's words from the other day in the desert came back to haunt him, and an exhausted smile crossed Ammon's features.

His friend was right. He was getting too old for all this.

Chapter 6: Dead and Lost

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Dark magic crept slowly around Maatmeses, four small strands of it slithering like black asps through the air. They encircled the vampire, inquisitive, drawn to the undead woman as moths to a flame. She lifted her left arm, allowing one strand to coil sinuously around it, and shivered as it made contact with her flesh. Her skin prickled, and darkness crept over her eyes. This was power unlike anything the men of Nehekharu could wield. Nagash had taught her well. He had taught them all well.

She whispered something, the word lost on the necromantic breeze that swept suddenly through her robes and armour. The winds were hers to control, hers to manipulate. Her mastery of the arcane had not come easily but once she had realised that it was, at its most rudimentary level, a set of laws, of guidelines, she had quickly caught up with the others. She had even surpassed the likes of Harakhte and Ushoran, much to their chagrin.

The winds were bound to laws, to behave in certain ways at certain commands, and through careful manipulation of those laws she could do anything.

The dead were her slaves now. For those that had wronged her, those pathetic mortals who had despoiled her city and slain her kin, penance was eternal servitude. It was justice, cold, dead and hers to command! She flashed her reptilian grin, every inch of it revealing more sharp fangs.

Taking a deep breath of the hot desert air, the Dread Lord of Nagash began to chant. The words came slowly at first, the blasphemous syllables almost too much for her lips to form. They were deadly words, malignant and cancerous, a blight on the very air into which they were uttered. The plumes of dark magic grew fatter, swollen by the unholy incantation, and smaller, slender tendrils began to creep away from them, furrowing into the eyes, ears and wounds of the bodies at her feet like ethereal corpse maggots.

Somewhere inside the thick storm clouds, thunder growled.

Maatmeses felt a thrill of exultation pass through her. She was at one with the winds! They were hers to mould into whatever purpose she saw fit, and they would obey her faultlessly, such was her command over the incantation that guided them. She had raised the dead many times before, in the dark belly of Nagashizzar, under the watchful gaze of the Great Necromancer, but the intensity of the experience never ceased to surprise her.

Slowly, awkwardly, the dead began to stir. They shook, their limbs twitching like the tail of a rattlesnake, and some flopped feebly over. The unwholesome stench of disturbed flesh rose from the blanket of spasmodic corpses.

A snarl snapping from her jaws, Maatmeses chanted louder. The dead would rise! They would! She may have lacked the deft skill with which W'soran and Neferata so easily re-animated the slain, but what she lacked in graceful mastery she more than made up for in raw power. The

words tumbling forcefully from her now black lips, Maatmeses pushed the winds into the recently dead. The pressure she exerted was immense. She forced the tendrils of magic into any available orifice; eyes, mouths, gaping wounds and headless necks were all the same to her. They all served as points through which her magic could infiltrate the corpses. Subtlety and caution were thrown to the tumultuous winds.

Still she cried out, her voice as stone, her willpower undeniable and, as she snarled again, the first of the zombies staggered unsteadily to its feet.

“Come to me! Rise! Walk again my children! Rise! Rise! *Rise!*”

All around her, the undead clambered over each other to stand. Bale-fires lit, one by one, in their once vacant eyes, shimmering with supernatural light. Soon, Mahrak would be theirs, she thought triumphantly. The city would fall, its palaces despoiled and its temples torn down - a fitting retribution for the wrongs that the men of that kingdom had inflicted on Lahmia. Its dead would rise again in servitude of her and the other Dread Lords, and in the name of Nagash, the city would be theirs. Then she could turn her attention to that which mattered most.

Mahrak guarded the quickest and safest route through the mountains. With the city in their possession, the petty Nehekharan kingdoms would be divided, cut clean through the centre. Their strength would be halved. With Mahrak secured, she and her brethren could once more return to Lahmia and begin the slow process of healing there, just as Nagash had promised.

It would be rebuilt. It would be restored. Her city would shine again! Lahmia would live, and she would prosecute all who stood against her!

Neck taut, head raised to the heavens, she screamed her incantations, and the thunder joined her.

Issa watched from the front rank of some skeletons as his mother raged, her voice calling the dead back from the underworld to walk again in the name of Nagash. Those that resisted she plucked violently from Usirian's realm, her magics trapping them in their ruined bodies. His vampire eyes could see the tendrils of necromantic power as they went about their work, invading corpses and re-animating the rotting husks. Such sight was a gift, one of the many that had come with joining the ranks of the undead. Before his ascension, he would never have been able to see the magic. He had been blind, and ignorant.

He had been mortal.

Another soul came hurtling back, dragged by a smoky tendril and encased in a prison of flesh, blood and rot. The sound of clicking bones and wet flesh filled the ears of Issa and, beside him, Ptoleme's, Odji's, Nebtawi's and Shepsit's too. The five children of Maatmeses stood and regarded their mother as she chanted, drawn and held there through a mixture of dutiful loyalty and macabre fascination. It lurked in the heart of every vampire, there was no escaping it.

Issa marvelled at the confidence with which Maatmeses manipulated the winds. There was no style to her movements, betraying her lack of inherent skill, but she more than compensated for that with blunt strength and willpower. It was no stretch of the imagination to believe that now, after decades of tutelage under the Great Necromancer himself, she could help him. He was trapped in a vicious cycle, one that had grown monstrous over the decades, bloated on a diet of fear and loss, until it had consumed his every thought. She was his last resort, and would do her utmost to carry out his request, of that he was sure.

The woman had always been determined, and self-assured, he noted, as she wrenched more spirits from their resting places. The years spent in Nagashizzar had done nothing to diminish that. They had been hard, yes, but he and his kin had emerged the better for it.

Another of the bodies shuddered and rose, its arms dragging it across the sands. It moved with a hellish vigour that Issa had seen before in the ghouls and ghosts that inhabited the lands to the north. It was hungry for the soft flesh and hot blood of the living. Such an expression was alien on the still-fresh face of the Nehekharan, making it all the more abhorrent to behold.

Issa raised a hand to his own face, feeling for the smooth skin and beneath that, the marble hardness that made him so strong. He knew that he had changed. All things changed with time, even immortals.

Especially immortals.

He had no qualm with killing now. He had done it a hundred times since fleeing Lahmia. In that single day of anguish he had transformed into something else, something bitter and angry as dangerous as the hungriest crocodiles of the River Vitae.

If only they hadn't stolen Eshe from him!

Fury flushed instantly through him, his brow darkening and his heart turning sour with poison. Something bestial growled in his throat. A part of him felt guilty for embracing the monster within so easily, he did not fight the feelings of hatred and ire that had, over the years, consumed him. He did not even try. They gave him strength, and power, and a bloodlust unlike any he used to feel. For the past four decades he had lived with the festering guilt of Eshe's death, weighing on his shoulders, and every day it had poisoned him a little more. Her death had not been fair! He should have done something. She should have done something. Anything! The accumulated pain had transformed him into something deadly, and angry, and few now could match his savagery in battle.

Every enemy was Eshe's unknown murderer, every cry of pain was Eshe's voice, and everybody wore Eshe's face, a mask, mocking his loss. He was barely recognisable as the vampire who had fled with Maatmeses from the ruin of Lahmia.

Would Eshe still love him, were she here? The thought hit him like a chariot and immediately he felt the beast subsiding. Guilt had that effect on him. It was pacifying in its gravity. Yes, he had changed over the past half-century. They all had, it was unavoidable. He took a deep breath, steadying himself.

The last of the zombies lurched awkwardly to its feet and at some silent command the legion of living dead shuffled forwards. The power the Great Necromancer had invested in Maatmeses had made her stronger. With the secrets of necromancy at her fingertips, she was as a dark goddess. Nothing could stand before her, or any of the other lords of Lahmia, for that matter. She could do practically anything now, and it was this knowledge that he clung so fervently to.

The stench intensified as the zombies staggered away, a trail of blood in their wake. They had not yet stopped bleeding from their natural deaths, and already they were bound in servitude to Maatmeses, he realised with a glimmer of awe. Necromancy was a potent art. It would deliver him from his grief. It had to, or else he was as damned as Eshe herself.

As the Dread Lord finished her rites, Issa turned and began the short walk back to their encampments. He would rest, and be fresh when he approached Maatmeses with his request. He would show her how serious he was, and she would see his pain, and she would understand. Their bond ran blood-deep, closer than any mortal mother-son could ever imagine.

A breeze brushed his face, and it was a natural one, the supernatural winds having guttered and died. He relished its touch and the soothing effect it had over him. A sigh escaped his lips and his hand slipped automatically to a cord around his neck, feeling for something attached there. Up ahead, their tents fluttered into view.

Ancient eyes watched the lonely figure of Issa as he vanished in the direction of their camp. They saw the painful memories that tore at his sanity as easily as they saw the sands at their feet, or the clouds in the sky, and they creased with sorrow, for they saw what Issa wanted, they saw the hope that he harboured like a precious stone in his heart, and they knew it was impossible.

Maatmeses walked slowly toward her remaining children, sobered from the intoxicating effects of the dark magic in light of Issa's wishes. For a moment she was overwhelmed by her own memories, as scenes from that last fateful day rose up hauntingly from the confines of her head, but it was pain, not vengeance, that filled her, because for the first time in decades, she felt dread, genuine dread, at the prospect of the day when her broken son came to her for help.

Mahrak's efforts to ride out and stem the tide of undeath at the heart of the Eastern Desert were truly pitiable. Their meagre army, with its chariots and horsemen, had been quickly overwhelmed by the sheer number of walking dead that Maatmeses threw against them. Speed and manoeuvrability were useless against the tar-pit that the Great Necromancer's legions represented. The skeletons did not flee. They did not quake from crippling flank attacks that would have crushed the spirits of living forces, even as the steeds of Mahrak crushed them with their sharp hooves. They were indomitable.

Those that fell Maatmeses raised again, whether the broken bones of her own skeletons or the bodies of their recently deceased enemies. Their

corpses were fresh, still hot and bloody, with all the traits of life about them, but Maatmeses cared not. She called their restless spirits back to life all the same, back to the desert, back into servitude of her and her iron will. It was her black sorcery that animated the undead creatures and granted them a semblance of life, and through those necromantic rites they were tied to her. Their souls were hers.

They obeyed her every command without question, something that tickled Maatmeses. In their undeath, the Nehekharans were bound at long last to her laws. She had found a way to bring them into line and ensure their eternal obedience. It was satisfying, to say the very least. Her laughter carried far on the rushing winds, mocking and jubilant.

“Vengeance!” she screamed.

“You are enjoying yourself, crone?” It was Ushoran. The vampire strode up next to her, easily a head taller than the woman, if not more. His heavy armour shimmered with gold and lapis-lazuli, ever the picture of affluence. She threw him a smile, her thin lips failing to contain the rows of needle-teeth within. It was as menacing an expression as it was a greeting.

“Every man that dies here belongs to us, Ushoran. They either supported the priest kings in the march against our city, or they partook in the destruction firsthand, or else they carry the blood-debt in their veins, passed down from their dead forefathers. They are traitors,” she said, the last word dragging into a hiss. Then, as an afterthought: “Yes, I am enjoying myself.”

“Just as you enjoyed your law-mongering in distant Lahmia. I always knew that you gleaned a certain satisfaction from your work. You concealed it, of course. Disguised in routine and righteousness labelled as ‘justice’, you turned it into something acceptable, necessary even. But I could always see it in your eyes. You love to watch them hurt, to see them suffer.”

Ushoran had been tame as of late, his barbed words few and far-between. The change in character was not unwelcome; ordinarily he was as irritating and arrogant as the priest kings themselves. Maatmeses did not dignify him her attention as she spoke, instead watching as her sinew-bound chariots burst through a line of bowmen. The crimson carnage set her stomach rumbling. It had been too long since she had last fed, and she could feel the Red Thirst awakening. It pushed at the back of her eyes, in her gums and her hollow gut, a dull ache.

“You pretend to know things, but I can see through you. Your transparency is embarrassing, my Dread Lord. Large words do not account for a large mind, just as a quick tongue does not account for a quick one, either. Do not assume that because you revel in the suffering of others, that everyone shares your grim sentiments.”

“How can you stand here and say that, when your eyes grow sharp and hungry at the bloodshed unfolding before you? I see the slight turn of your lips, the rise and fall of your chest. You love to hear them scream,” he said definitively, tongue flashing out to moisten dry lips. Something akin to confusion flickered in his eyes, and then went. Maatmeses did not notice.

"I see Lahmia, smouldering and destroyed, in my dreams every night. Every night, unfailing. The screams of my dying children haunt my very soul, an eternal stain on my being that I do not think I will ever rid myself of. Not all the waters in the River Vitae could cleanse me of its corrosive taint. When the smell of hot ash carries on the wind, Lahmia burns all over again, forever engulfed in a fiery conflagration within the confines of my mind. Can you begin to imagine how that feels, forced to endure these torments for the rest of my existence? I will tell you, Ushoran, it is torture in its vilest form. For all these crimes of war and more, I would see every man, woman and child in the Kingdom of the Great River dead. I am justified," she said venomously, spitting the words like poison from her lips, "I am justified in the relief their deaths bring me. It is owed me."

The conversation lapsed, Ushoran's mouth clamped shut. His silence warmed her. For a minute, the two stood and appreciated the din of battle. Screams, primal and stark in the face of such unnatural foes, pierced the air and intermingled with the moans of the wounded and the clash of blade on blade as every one of the men ahead fought for their very lives. It was a futile effort.

Maatmeses struggled to control herself, her rage like a coiled cobra, just waiting to burst out in a flurry of sudden movement. Tension knotted her muscles and she stood, stock still, unsure of whether she would be able to control herself, if she so much as moved. Her memories of the fall of Lahmia were inciting. They inspired savagery, and tugged at the strings of her sanity. To dwell on Lahmia was to see blood, hot and red and gushing.

She took a long, deep breath.

"Why are you here, Ushoran? I am assuming it was not to exchange pleasantries with me. Return to your own forces, and prepare to resume marching south. This slaughter will not last much longer. Their very gods have abandoned them to our depredations."

"I come on Vashanesh's request, to inform you that you are not to kill them all." Maatmeses face creased up, a map of wrinkles and shallow grooves.

"What?"

"He was quite explicit that you should not slay all of the Nehekharan fools. They could have valuable information in those brittle skulls of theirs. He would use this to our advantage in the war." Ushoran's words were strained, as though he was struggling to remember the simple message. Maatmeses cast him a derisive glance. There was little respect in her eyes.

"What is the matter with you?"

"I am fine, I do not need your false concern," snapped the vampire lord. "Follow his wishes and ensure that you detain some prisoners." With that, he stalked back to his army. Maatmeses shrugged and returned to the battle at hand. Thunder growled quietly overhead, rolling across the killing fields and striking dismay into the men there. She could feel the forlorn emotion festering in their hearts as easily as she could feel the wind on her neck. It was a gift, a gift of her ancient blood. She had made no promises. She would make no special effort to preserve the lives of

traitors and criminals. If Vashanesh wanted prisoners, he should take some himself.

Barely an hour had passed since they had stumbled out of the night and into combat, a mass of creaking bones and empty sighs, rank upon rank of gleaming skeletons and shambling corpses for as far as the eye could see. The very clouds had darkened as they neared, clouds that had followed them since Lahmia, products of the Dread Lords' dark magic. Thunder tumbled from the heavens, a subtle growl at first that quickly turned into great roars of anger, which shook the very foundations of the desert itself with their resounding fury.

The thick clouds turned day to night, hope to despair, and concealed Nagash's unholy legions from the pantheon of Nehekhara, hiding the atrocities that they committed from their godly wrath.

And they did commit atrocities. The dead were sacred throughout all of Nehekhara. Their houses outnumbered those of the living; towering marble edifices and ancient stone tombs, some dating back as far as the first king, mighty Settra himself. The Land of the Great River was a kingdom of the dead, but for the servants of the Great Necromancer, the necropolises served an altogether different purpose.

They were reinforcement points.

Every time they passed one of the cities of tombs Maatmeses, W'soran, Arkhan or one of the other Dread Lords would walk its empty streets, and call out the incantations that summoned the dead from their graves. Ancient skulls shook, and bones that had lain undisturbed for centuries stirred, rising obediently from their tombs to do battle for Nagash's lieutenants.

Maatmeses would snarl as she awoke the sanctified tombs and cry out, her voice thick with righteousness, for she was exacting just penance on the men of the desert. They despoiled the streets of her fair Lahmia! They unsettled the balance that she fought so hard to maintain in her city, and this gave her every right, by all the gods, to claim her vengeance! They had befouled her thoughts, her memories, her life, when they had torn down the walls of her homeland, without a care in the world for the atrocities they were committing.

They were vermin, lower than vermin, they were criminals, and they would bloody her blades to temper the raw hatred of her heart, if such a thing were possible. This was retribution at its most literal, she thought, as the creaking skeletons and bandaged wights stumbled from their death-beds into the grey light of day.

The sun had risen, although it was a glimmer of silver through the dense storm clouds. Another regiment of the fleshless warriors stalked across the desert toward the Host of Mahrak and the men stumbled back. The action was involuntary, their legs twitching of their own accord. Their urge to flee was palpable, thought Maatmeses. She could taste it on the air, mingled with the sickly-sweet stench of spoiling flesh, and the hard, bland smell of grave dust. The stench of the mortals was rank, and fresh, and hinted at the terror that lurked in each and every one of their hearts. They were cowards.

The stench was familiar. It was the same that had saturated the streets of her Lahmia, nearly four decades ago. The smell was vivid and pungent, teasing unwelcome memories from the depths of her mind. She dwelled on them, and turned them into something useful, something terrifying. Her anger rose with every remembered moment of Lahmia's last days. They would die, she promised, every last one of them. She would see to that personally. Ushoran's message was drowned amid a tumultuous sea of vengeance.

Her brow darkening, the ancient vampire infiltrated the minds and souls of the remaining Nehekharan resistance. There were roughly three-scores of them left, but their numbers were irrelevant to her. They were mortals, weak and soft, easy for her vengeful will to penetrate. The horrors she saw and felt within them brought a crocodilian grin to her face, as much an expression of joy as one of hate.

The dead were coming for them. They were coming to stab them and kill them and make them their own. They were relentless and would not stop - could not be stopped. When they broke and died, the unclean light in their eyes did not fade, and moments later they would rise again, with rusted weapons that bayed for their blood. The blood of the living.

The lights in their eyes! The lights!

And always grinning, that toothy, fleshless grin, as though they took true delight in the cold slaughter they wreaked!

They were pathetic. Powerless. Where were their priests now? Where were their gods? Ptra was banished behind the murky storm clouds. Phakth's falcons filled the skies, yes, but the lack-lustre light of undeath shone in their carrion-eyes. Geheb birthed rank after rank of ancient skeleton warriors, and the Asp Goddess' poisons were useless against their decaying armies. The deities that the Nehekharans revered were as powerless as their worshippers. Maatmeses laughed, a husky sound, a dry, hard whisper that slid from between thin lips, and if a python could have laughed, that is how it would have sounded. Then she struck, with the speed and savagery of that very same serpent.

She tore through the soft minds of the men of Mahrak. The attack was brutal in its savagery. It bordered on the psychotic. She splintered sanity and unshackled the foulest nightmares, tearing down the walls of reality before the mortals' very eyes and reducing them to gibbering wrecks. Snake-headed demons crawled from the darkest recesses of the men's imaginations, to devour their souls. Thick, black swarms of flesh-eating tomb scarabs erupted from the sands at their feet, intent on stripping the flesh from their bones. Many took their blades to each other, seeing orcs, traitors and skeletons where there were only friends.

All the while Maatmeses stood there, lips moving noiselessly, her eyes fixed, unblinking, on the Nehekharans.

Most died from the shock, their thoughts a torrent of fear and darkness, but a handful survived. Their screams were chilling, and, broken from the inside, they made easy prey for the skeletons. The ancient, battle-worn blades of the undead warriors sliced forward, silencing them and putting them from their misery.

Only a few remained, the strongest-willed, those that had the inner fortitude to resist Maatmeses' vengeance, if only slightly. She continued to

laugh, exerting her will and directing the skeletons against the last tiny pocket of resistance. There could not be half a dozen men left.

“Kill!” she commanded. Her silent instructions were as simple as they were final.

“Kill! Kill! Kill!”

“Stop,” said the clear, calm voice of Vashanesh, the vampire appearing suddenly behind her. He was an imposing figure in his armour of gold-black lacquer. In his hand he clutched a large, golden khopesh, inscribed with glowing hieroglyphs that shone despite the absence of any real light. It was an heirloom, a weapon of the kings of Lahmia. He must have taken it from his treasury in the city’s last days.

Maatmeses heard him, and obeyed.

“Do not kill them yet. We have use for the mortals, and the knowledge contained in their heads. Take the few survivors captive.” His voice rang with the authority of leadership and something else, something familiar, something impeccable.

Maatmeses obeyed. Her legion lowered their weapons and the undead abominations surrounded the last few living souls, rounding them up into a tiny group.

A hand rested on her shoulder-plate, heavy and strong, as Vashanesh leaned in to whisper in her ear. His breath was heady and rich, betraying the nature of his recent activities, if the single stain of blood on his lips did not already.

“Good, Maatmeses, good. That was not so hard now. You would do best to appreciate my orders in future; I do not make them lightly.”

Everything was wrong. She felt like retching, but was frozen to the spot. She wanted to run, far away, to move and speak, but she could not. Her limbs were not her own. Her muscles were unresponsive. She was trapped, like the spirits she had forced into the carcasses of the slain: a consciousness bound to another’s will. A tasteless concoction of confusion, panic and indignation seethed within her. Inwardly, she screamed.

Chapter 7: A Goddess Reborn

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The crooked priest stepped out into the path of the golden sun, savouring the kiss of the daylight on his leathery flesh. A more accurate word could not be found to describe his skin; time had taken a terrible toll on its condition. Where once it had stretched, now it pulled taut. Its healthy olive tan had dirtied and darkened, the breeding ground of liver spots and scabs, and the muscle beneath had grown thin and wiry, such that his flesh hung slack at his bones.

That he could still feel the sunlight on the husky parchment of his skin at all was a miracle, from both Basth herself, and from the mortuary cult's timeless efforts.

"Blessed Ptrā," he muttered, for it was a glorious morning. He walked toward a contingent of spearmen, moving with surprising speed for one so old. It was one of four regiments that filled the central plaza of the Temple of Basth, rank upon rank of flashing bronze armour and glinting gold weapons. They were magnificent, he thought with a glimmer of pride that more than matched the dancing sunlight on the men's armaments. Each warrior was as well versed with their spear as he was with his rituals, and they were just as deadly. Not once in the temple's history had it been breached, not by the orcs that swarmed down from the mountains to the east, nor the desert raiders that charged out of the dunes at first light.

Under the watchful eye of Basth, the temple guard were both fearless and protected. She inspired them, filled their veins with vigour and courage even as her priests invoked her name and uttered the incantations that would bring about Basth's protection on her servants. A smile split his features and his lips in equal measure. They did not bleed.

Walking closer, ignoring the sand that sunk into his sandals, he scanned the front rank of the first regiment. His rheumy eyes watered under the sheer intensity of the sun but he ignored them; it would not last long. There wasn't enough water in his desiccated body for any serious tears.

"Priest Nebankh, it is good to see you." He paused at the mention of his name, searching out the culprit in the row of unfamiliar faces. The soldiers came and went so quickly over the years, it was most difficult to keep track of them all. His hollow gaze settled on one particular man.

"Greetings to you, Captain. You look well, the goddess Basth must be watching over you."

"Either that, or the regular meals I've finally been getting under my belt!" he said with a chuckle. Nebankh smiled weakly. Who was he to turn aside an invocation of their goddess' name by one of the temple's head priests? The man had served here as captain for a number of years now, but despite that, he could not for the life of him remember his name. Not that it mattered, in the grand scale of events. Given a decade or two, and he would be replaced by another just like him, and Nebankh would have another name needlessly occupying space in his head. Perhaps sooner than a decade, going from the tales he had heard of the Abominations' advances from across the mountains.

Anyway, he thought, his mind returning to the matter at hand, he recognised the man's face. That was the important thing.

"Indeed, forgive my bluntness but there is much to arrange, and little time."

"Of course," said the Captain with a curt nod. Nebankh continued.

"Your forces, they are mobilised?" It was this man's responsibility for organising the military might of the temple. The priesthood had far more pressing and demanding tasks to attend to, and did not need the distractions of such mundane tasks as rousing and equipping all the guard.

There were far more ancient and terrible beings that needed rousing first.

"All four regiments are arrayed before you, waiting only on High Priestess Istnofret's command to march."

"Excellent. She will be most pleased to hear this." They did not have long to act. The undead legions of Nagash swarmed across the deserts toward Mahrak, unimpeded by sleep or sandstorms, or hunger, save that of their sickening appetite for the flesh of the living. Several smaller armies had reportedly broken off, like malignant cancers, spreading their foul contagion across the lands. Nothing could withstand the tide of living bone as the skeleton armies of the Great Necromancer advanced on the people of Nehekhara, under the leadership of his fell vampire captains, and that cursed bastard Arkhan the Black. The priest clutched at a talisman about his neck, his lips moving in silent prayer. Just thinking the name of that treacherous sorcerer made him feel unclean.

The dead rose in the wake of Nagash's unholy armies, blasphemous and unnatural incantations bringing movement and pretend vigour to their broken limbs, and his numbers swelled with every victory. Nebankh could not imagine the horror of facing down the hordes of skeletons, revenants, spirits and corpses as they shambled toward him. The thought of it quelled his heart. He hoped that when the time came, he would not fail his goddess.

"I will go now, and relay your readiness to our most revered High Priestess," said Nebankh, something of an eagerness shining in his otherwise lacklustre eyes. The captain bowed, leaving the priest free to return to the temple, where he knew Istnofret waited. "It shall not be long before we march, and bring an end the blight on our land, in the name of Basth, and all Nehekhara." A ragged cheer went up from the nearest soldiers, their voices strong and brave, and young, thought Nebankh, his face twisting into a grimace after only a handful of steps. The pressure on his knees was nigh unbearable. He might as well have been carrying an Ushabti on his back, for all the pain he endured without the aid of his staff.

Guilt tickled his atrophied insides, and not for the first time the priest remembered that there were others in a lot more suffering than he. What were aching joints, compared to the loss of one's family, the ruination of one's home, or an axe to the skull? He had it easy, this side of the mountains. They all did. Across the eastern deserts, it was a very different story.

The meagre forces thrown against the tide of undead were hastily assembled and ill-prepared. They did little but bolster the Dark Lord's ranks,

rotting carcasses trapped in eternal servitude and forced to march against their once friends and family.

It could not be allowed to continue and under King Alcadizzar's leadership it would not. The greatest army ever assembled was coming to be, regiments from all across the Kingdom of the Great Desert coming together to battle the underlings of the once-Usurper. The Sphinx Legion of Quatar, the Sun Cohort of Prince Imrathepis of Numas, even Khemrian's charioteers, under the leadership of the legendary Captain Ammon, all and many more besides were united in their desperate cause.

If that despicable priest Nagash and his vile acolytes wanted a war, Alcadizzar would bring him one, and it would be the greatest war the world had ever seen.

The air was filled with the methodical chant of the liche priests, their monotonous tones carrying far into the belly of the temple itself. They spoke in perfect unison, and had been now for nearly ten minutes, concentration etched on each and every one of their drawn faces. They were as dedicated to the Incantation of Awakening as they were ancient, and that was no small feat. A few of their number were old enough to have overseen the construction of the very temple they stood in, centuries ago. The chanting went on, heightening in intensity, in strength, as if the priests were trying to shake the very heavens with their voices.

They would awaken the guardians of the temple, the immortal servants of beautiful Basth herself, and with their aid lay the dead to rest once more.

The cohort of priests stood in a half-moon arrangement, and at their centre, her arms outspread and her eyes closed tight, was Istnofret herself. The High Priestess stood out clearly from the assembly of wrinkled, time-worn faces, for her own was untouched by the long years of their existence. She was over a century old, and yet her bronzed desert skin was as fresh and smooth as it had been when she had first dedicated herself, body and soul, to the graceful cat goddess. It was her blessing, an undisputable sign that Basth watched over her, her keen amber eyes fixed always on her favourite disciple.

Her throat burned from the power of the syllables that leapt, graceful as a cat, from her tongue, but she did not stop. None of them did. Even when they reached the end of the tedious incantation, they began anew, the two chants running seamlessly into each other. They would not stop until their efforts were rewarded, until the towering denizens of the temple of Basth stirred from their sleep of ages.

Time stretched and elongated, losing all definition to the priests. They stood still in concentration, their brows furrowed, as much statues as the monstrous constructs before them, for it had been many years since they last had need to rouse their loyal guardians from their slumber. Despite the priests' best efforts at maintaining their unblemished glory, dust had settled subtly in their servants' joints and about their godly faces, proof to all of their prolonged disuse.

That would all change, soon.

Outside, the sun bore mercilessly down, her rays bringing warmth and joy to the assembled soldiers and dispelling the growing darkness in their

hearts, but within the depths of the temple complex, they were far from Ptra's gleaming influence. It was cool, the only source of heat the dripping candles that had been placed, purposefully, one before each priest. The fat melted, dripping like sweat down the candles' bodies and anchoring them to the floor, as the greasy tears grew solid again at the base.

The candles' flames danced hauntingly at the whim of some invisible touch. They were far, far from the desert breeze outside.

Istnofret was shouting now, but it was a voice of confidence and determination and righteousness, a sound at odds with her slight figure. She was the High Priestess of Basth, and she was invoking the favour of their most gracious and fickle of goddesses. She would heed her call!

Then they were all shouting, their unified voice echoing about the chamber and bouncing back, two-fold in strength, again, and again, the arcane syllables building in concentration. The depth of their focus was immense. The incantation finished, and began again, with not so much as a pause for breath. The liches were too wrapped up to breathe now. That was a luxury they could indulge in at a later time.

As one, their eyes flashed emerald, innumerable green slits shining like jewels in the shadowy vault. It had begun.

From out of the gloom the first of the temple's immortal guards stepped forth. It leapt down from its dais with a crash and onto the sandy ground, to join the priests. Bone clicked and wood moaned as the construct took its first steps in decades, wickedly curved claws leaving fearsome grooves in the sand. It towered over its priestly audience, ten feet tall and built around solid rock, metal and bone.

Emeralds glinted from the recesses of its face as the unliving sentinel regarded the liche priests. Their eyes shone back like tiny mirrors, reflecting the glory of their goddess. Emanating it.

They were awakening. They were awakening!

More of the haughty guardians stepped from their platforms and into the glare of the priests, who were still chanting, their throats cut raw, voices savage. Within minutes, a score of the artificial monsters had assembled. Creaks and clicks peppered the ears of the priesthood as the heads of the constructs swivelled to regard them. Each bore the visage of blessed Basth herself, in her war guise as The Lioness, their cat-like death masks and feline features both beautiful and terrible to behold.

With a deathly sigh, Istnofret fell silent, and in seconds the rest had followed suit. A handful, the oldest, sank to the floor, or else leaned heavily on their gold-headed staffs. The lurid jade died from their eyes, becoming a glimmer, and then but milky white once more. The gods were not their servants, and their blessings did not come easily.

Nebankh had not felt this tired in living memory. It was as if every ounce of his essence had been drawn out, stolen, used to power the godly machinations that stood, subservient, before them. Even Istnofret, their High Priestess and Grand Hierophant, looked gaunt, her usually flawless cheeks wan and drawn. It would not last. The goddess would restore her beauty, she always did, but that did not deduct from the evidence of

their excruciating efforts. His lungs might as well have been scorched with lightning, for all the searing grief they gave him.

Seeing Istnofret now, leant against the wall for support, he might as well have walked back into the past. He had only been an acolyte then, but the memory was as clear to him as the sky outside was blue. Her trembling lips, those eyes, full of fear. But behind that, a steely determination as well. In the first seconds of meeting her, sprawled against the temple wall, her chest heaving with the exertion that only the endless desert can bring, he could not tell whether she wanted to thank him, or rob him.

As her supple body had slipped, prone, to the hot sands, he had found his answer, and so Istnofret had come to reach the sanctity of the Temple of Basth.

The groans of the constructs as they tested their limbs drew his attention back to the matter at hand. Wood creaked. Metal sang. Rock growled.

“The Ushabti are awoken,” he hissed. Let the undead come. Let them face the walking incarnations of Basth herself! Their brittle bones will grind and break beneath the undeniable strength of the Ushabtis’ monstrous khopesh. He cared not for the potency of the Abominations’ revolting magics. They could not raise the dead from dust.

Chapter 8: The Eyes of a Crocodile

IC -1163

Sand, like rocky grain beneath his feet. Pressed into his cheeks, his arms, hard against his flesh. White stars, flickering torch lights in the oily blackness of his sight.
An explosion of pain.

Voices this time, the tongue of the desert, heavy with accent and sensuality. Even intoxicating in their ambiguity. They slid into his ears, a background murmur sleep.

The empty blackness of his vision slowly cleared, a dull greyness seeping from the corners of his eyes and banishing the black. It was like peering through a dense mist, as cloying and impenetrable as smoke. He struggled to make sense of the shapes that emerged from the grim veil.

Spears of pain lanced into his head, stabbing at his consciousness and threatening to kill it to the world. Stab. Stab. Stab. He'd never felt a headache like it. Fighting back against the agony, he concentrated on his surroundings. It was all he had. All he could remember. His surroundings were his anchor to reality.

There was greyness. A lifeless colour, interrupted with smudges of movement, black and white. Figures or people? Two of them. He tried to move, to sit up, but his limbs were leaden. The ghost world shifted around him like a sea of shadow and mist.

His heart began to race. He felt like a new-born, helpless and vulnerable. Weapon-less.

He was naked without his spear.

Smoke crept into his nose, an unmistakable smell if ever there was one. Someone was burning something, nearby. He clung to the hot, tangy stench, used it as leverage to secure himself from the abyss of unconsciousness. He would not slip away, not again. Why was there smoke? Was he back in Mahrak?

Realisation hit him like a sandstorm in the face and he groaned, the sound loud and dull in his own ears. The battle. The Dead. Their grinning skulls, always grinning, and then the nightmares.

He shuddered bodily, his arms and legs trembling, and scrunched his eyes tight in the hollows of his face. Husn had taken a blade to the chest, one of the abomination's rusted swords slipping behind his battered breastplate and burying itself into his heart. He could still see the blood, could see it erupting in a stomach-churning spray of salty redness. Sekhet took an axe to the face, the ancient weapon splitting his features as easily as if he were a piece of chopping wood. His expression crumpled under the brutal wound. He was dead before he hit the sand.

Even Morak, brave and strong Morak, he who could wrestle bare-handed with the lions of the southern plains had not survived. He had clawed out his own eyes, screaming terrible things about the voracious tomb scarabs that hunted in the depths of the city's necropolises. He had watched helpless as his friend's fingers plunged into his own eye sockets and scooped out the gelatinous contents, crushing them beyond all recognition in his steely fists even as the twin holes of his face poured blood.

The stench was nauseating, of rotten flesh and fresh, rich blood, the kind of smell that invades your nose and sticks on your tongue, so that every second the taste of death grows thicker, more putrid in your mouth.

He balked at the memory of the smell. He could still taste it, behind his lips, smeared across his gums. The sickly-sweet flavour of death.

Muscles clenched tight and sick raced suddenly through his throat. He rolled, his body convulsing, and splattered the sand with red-green bile. He relished the bitter acidity of his own stomach as it filled his mouth. It was a thousand times better than the previous taste.

The physical trauma was sobering. Flecks of colour flourished into existence, and the ghosts began to solidify. The edges of their figures grew more distinct, more real before his eyes.

"Help me," he croaked. At the sound of his voice, the ghost-men froze, becoming as grey statues. He could make out armour now, monochrome breastplates and silver greaves. He concentrated, ignoring the thumping inside of his head, and squinted hard. The pieces of armour shone bronze and golden, the greyness fading like shadows before the rising sun. His breathing was hollow, husky.

"I said help me."

The voice that replied penetrated through skin, muscle and bone, resounding in his very soul. It screamed to be obeyed, respected, feared.

"Silence."

The vehemence of the word was shocking. He twitched under the aural assault, writhing into the sand and sending a spray of it into the air. All around him the tent fluttered, a plaything of the wind, and the enthralling voice spoke again.

"Your affinity with the mind is as potent as Lady Neferata's is for the senses. Where she creates lust, you create nightmares. Where she shows hot-blooded men exactly what they want to see, the burning desires of their loins, you reveal unto cowards the darkest, most intimate and shocking of terrors." The statue moved suddenly, a blur before his eyes. The bronze-black figure darted behind him, the smell of decay wafting in its wake. It had moved so fast!

An ice cold finger ran across his head, slowly and purposefully. Then a second, and a third. Every second of contact reviled him. He wanted to scream out, to shout and cry in loathing. Something small and hard - a ring - snagged his flesh, drawing a single drop of blood, but all he could

do was shiver under that chilling touch.

He knew now what it was that hovered over him like some gluttonous carrion bird. He could sense it in his soul as much as he could smell its rot on the air, and feel the stoniness of its dead fingers. It was the Enemy. It was the Enemy and it had him.

It had him.

After a moment's pause the unnatural monster's voice resumed, unperturbed by the lack of any reply. It had not expected one.

"The mind is a thing of beauty, so perfect in its intricacies, and so integral to a person's existence, yet infinitely delicate at the same time. To touch it, even slightly, is to risk undoing it, and it is so very precious." The harrowing touch of his captor did not break, as though he were an expert physician, carefully examining the skull of his patient for signs of damage. His voice, dark but sweet as honey, continued.

"Within its twisting pathways, there lie one's dreams and desires, their loves and hates, their plots and their schemes. Every little parchment of knowledge they have ever read, and every skill learned, is housed there, protected and hidden. It has the capacity for hope, and courage, fear and despair." He ran his fingers over the mortal's skull one last time, as though savouring the touch of the man at his mercy, and then turned to fix his gaze on the second figure.

"Tear it all apart."

A strangled gasp rose up from beneath him.

"Scour the crimson depths of his head for the knowledge I seek; knowledge of the Priest King Alcadizzar and his attempts to resist us. I would learn all there is to know so the Great Necromancer, in his infinite wisdom, can better guide us against the armies of the desert people."

The figures shifted again, his captors changing places. The monstrosity at his back strode confidently from the tent, disappearing into the shadows outside as silently as a desert rat. He had but a moment to himself before the second figure was upon him. Its grave-breath filled the air, and the hairs on the back of his neck stood tall. His teeth chattered, reminding him all too suddenly of the skeletons that marched under the veiled sun outside.

The atrocity stared down, eyes filled with hatred, pain, and an omniscience that he found deeply unsettling.

Then all he knew was darkness.

He was stood in a room. Huge stone pillars surrounded him on all sides, massive supports that were engraved with hieroglyphics. They depicted ancient battles, and ritual ceremony, and one glyph in particular was repeated over and over along the winding scripture: that of the great god

Sobki. It was a simple emblem; a seated man with the head of a crocodile, and yet its recurrence was enough to inspire a sickening anxiety in him. The hieroglyphs seemed alive, and ancient, lit by the erratic torchlight that burned in a dozen braziers about the chamber.

No, not just a chamber, he realised. A sanctum. The heart of a temple, dedicated to the fierce crocodile god and all his worldly servants. His repeated emblem proved as much. A cold sweat settled over him.

He turned, and found himself waist deep in water. He could not remember stepping into the pool that sat, still and clear, at the centre of the inner sanctum, but somehow he was there. The water was cool, and refreshing. He scooped a handful of the crystalline liquid and splashed it to his face, to cleanse it of the sweat.

Lilies floated decoratively atop the still water, their green leaves enhanced by the enchanting blue flowers that rested on them. They drifted randomly on the calm surface of the pool, some clumping together at the corners, while others floated alone nearer the middle. He could not deny their appeal. They were beautiful, especially lit by the subtle orange of the torchlight.

His gaze rose from the surface of the water to the far side of the pool, and a figure met his gaze. It was a woman. She was seated serenely atop a throne, between two of the massive pillars, and her eyes were closed. He took a step nearer, careful not to disturb her.

Her skin was pale for a Nehekharan, yet she was without doubt a woman of the desert kingdoms. It was evident from the shape of her eyes, and her high cheekbones. She looked almost regal, he thought with a glimmer of awe. White robes of office hung from her shoulders and about her waist, and he recognised instantly that here was an official. The more he studied her, the more apparent it became. She held her head high, and proud, and her shoulders were squared. She clutched the arms of the golden throne, as though about to rise, but instead remained seated, unmoving.

What was he doing here, and how had he come to be here? He couldn't remember, his memory a hazy wash of names and places. Who was he? He took a step back, uncertain of his surroundings. Anxious.

"You are The Survivor," said the woman on the throne, as though to answer his doubts. Her eyelids shot open, revealing eyes that looked as ancient as the very temple he stood in. They did not so much pierce him as strike him round the face.

"Why am I here?"

"You will not talk out of turn." The tone of her voice was unforgiving, and his words died on his tongue. "You are here to answer for crimes against Lahmia." Her eyes held him rooted to the spot, locked in the pool as though it were packed full with sand, and not water. Crimes against Lahmia? Confusion clouded his thoughts while he waited, helpless, for his sentence.

"You fought under the priest king of Mahrak, and with his guard bloodied the streets of Lahmia. You despoiled our Fountain of Basth, that which is sacred to the noble cat-goddess. You torched the offices of law here." Something in her eyes flashed, fiery and condemning. She bore no scrolls, the charges coming straight from her lips, drawn from the air, and yet he could not deny that he had been there, barely a man, and had fought against the traitorous, blasphemous monsters that called that cursed city home.

"Punishment for these grievous charges is the death penalty. Death by Sobki. That is my decree. What do you have to say for yourself?" His stomach knotted, and he fought the urge to gag. The feeling was strangely familiar, but he could not think why. He stumbled over his words in his desperation to spit them out.

"Lahmia was cursed! It was the lair of godless beasts, taken to worshipping The Usurper, that foul, monstrous being! The secret shame of Khemri! We fought for the good of the Great Kingdom, we fought to remove the taint-"

"That is no defence. No excuse."

"This is not fair!"

"DO NOT TALK TO ME OF FAIR!"

A pair of golden scales was suddenly beside the judge, two shining bronze discs held aloft on a thin rod by delicate-looking chains of gold. One the left side, there was a fresh heart. It beat slowly, a trickle of blood spluttering from the fatty, purple canals that emerged from it.

It was balanced on the other side by a pendant. The small, sun-gold artefact glowed under the flickering torchlight, and was outweighed by the throbbing heart, the offending organ sinking slowly but inexorably down so that it almost touched the table. His breath caught in his throat. He understood the severity of what he saw.

"You had no right to undertake the illegality of that which you are accused. There is no justification! I find you guilty of murder; murder of my people, of my home, of my life's work and of my city. You are guilty. Guilty." Her lips parted, as though struggling to contain the exultation that flushed her veins. "Guilty!"

"You are obsessed!" he shrieked. She ignored his pitiful cries, repeating the word over and over, till it burned into his brain and was all he could think of.

"Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!"

"No! No, please, I am not guilty. Please, not Sobki. Not Sobki!"

"How dare you utter such blatant lies, when it is your own corrupt heart that has revealed these damning truths to me?" Realisation struck him like a thunderbolt and he looked from the tilting scales to himself. His eyes travelled down from his collar bone, to his bare chest, to the gaping hole in his flesh where his heart should have been. His jaw went slack and he brought his hand around to tentatively touch the hollow chasm in his torso. It was soft, tender, a jolt of pain jumping through his chest.

She had his heart. She had his heart. A moan escaped his throat, deep and forlorn.

"Justice will be done," she snapped, and for a second her head was that of a monstrous crocodile. Thick, gnarly scales coated her snout, and her leathery throat bulged as the monster gnashed her jaws. Yellow, speckled eyes fixed onto his own, accusing, vengeful, hungry, and ropes of saliva slipped from between her teeth.

Then he blinked, and as quickly as the face appeared, it was gone again.

"You belong to Sobki now, and to me, Survivor." Reaching over with her right hand, she removed his rapidly-cooling heart from the scales. They did not tip. She lifted it to her bronzed lips and, with the nonchalance of eating an apple, took a great bite out of it.

He balked. He couldn't move, couldn't flee, was forced to watch with wide eyes as her needle-fangs sank into his soft heart, forced to watch as his blood ran like juice from the corpulent fruit that was his heart. She shuddered as she tore into the organ, satisfaction rippling through her undead body.

Then she was gone.

He sobbed, his chest heaving as if he had been running through the desert, and fell suddenly backwards. Whatever constraints held him still had vanished, and he overbalanced, falling with a splash into the lily-pond. Water crashed over him, submerging him in its coolness. He rose choking.

He had to get out. He had to flee this place, before the judge returned with her punishment. He had been deemed the property of Sobki. He belonged to the god now. He knew what punishment that entailed, it was one of the more infamous means of reprimanding the thieves and murderers of the desert kingdoms.

Even as he thought it, a ripple pierced the still surface of the pool. The small break swept closer, growing as it did so into a seam a metre long, then two. He took a slow step back, afraid of attracting its attention, but knowing already that it was too late.

An eerie silence filled the inner sanctum. Even the braziers, that had previously crackled and spat their burning contents onto the temple floor, fell quiet, waiting, knowing what was about to occur.

A lily lifted and upturned, the fuchsia flower vanishing beneath the surface in the wake of the advancing ripple. It was barely four metres away

now, and a row of stubby scales broke the waterline, green and grim. In seconds it would have him.

He flailed in the water, tried to turn, to outrun the purposeful wake, but his legs felt leaden, impeded by the water. A whimper burst from his mouth, echoing in the confines of the temple of Sobki.

He was a dead man and he knew it.

A surge of water washed over him, The Survivor, and he had time for one more step through the pool before a gigantic pair of scaly jaws burst from the water and clamped shut around him. Knife-long teeth sliced into his skin and, driven by the iron muscles of the crocodile's jaws, tore his body apart in an explosion of ruby droplets.

"Vengeance is mine," whispered the crocodile, as it ravaged what little was left of the man, reducing him to ruined strips of tattered flesh.

Maatmeses stepped back from the stiff corpse of the man in the sand, and headed toward the tent flaps. His knowledge was hers now, devoured in every sense of the word. She would return to Vashanesh and pass on that which she had learned.

With an awkward grace she stalked from the tent and into the cold, starless night outside. A storm was coming. A storm to rival all storms, so fierce that the Great Desert itself would melt away before its tenacity, its almighty wrath.

And she would lead it.

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INVOCATION

The Next Issue.....

Due out in March 2010

Articles

How to paint undead beasts
The vampire bloodlines – an indepth look
The results of the Golden Bat Winter 2009
And as usual, much much more.....

Apologies

It is with regret we were unable to include the second part of the graphic story “A fitting End” by Ophidicus. Unfortunately real life can interfere, as it did in this case. However I am pleased to say that it should be in the next issue!

As usual, I hope you enjoyed the issue. Please feel free to leave feedback, and of course stop by Carpe Noctem and join in the undead fun!

Until next time.....

Disciple of Nagash

CARPE NOCTEM

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